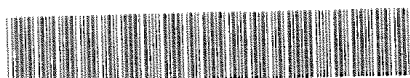


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OVER THE BORDERLINES

INTRODUCTION OVER THE BORDERLINES

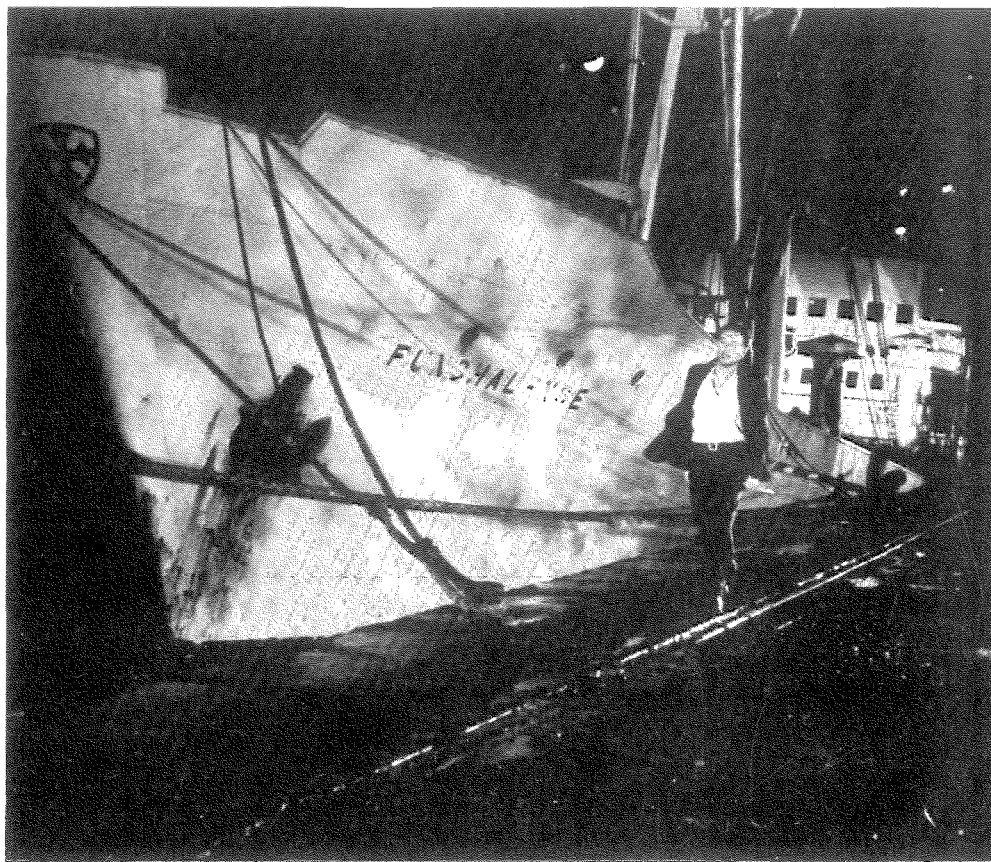
Nostros

Nosotros, nous autres, we others: English has not the explicit understanding of the Romance languages that what forms and shapes identity is difference. Semiotics poses the constitutive function of difference in the production of meaning, as opposed to some notional, causal or essentialist, connection between signifier and signified. In the context of this issue's questioning of national identity, what emerges most clearly is the role of the foreign in defining the national: that a cinema or a broadcasting network or a discourse of advertising is British because it is not French or German or North American. Immediately questions present themselves: are we not all parts of a 'global postmodern' in Stuart Hall's phrase, caught in the homogeneous media sphere of instantaneous communication? Alternatively, isn't Britain, like other nations, riven by internal contradictions and nationalist, regional and other aspirations that threaten the implied unity of national identity? Is the self/other binary necessary, or necessarily either positive or negative, in the struggles to create democratic media and cultures? Is cultural relativity the latest in a line of attempts on the part of the liberal-humanist tradition to make itself acceptable to the cultures it has oppressed? Does the discursive formation of nationality seek to hide its constitutive gaps, elisions, discontinuities and horizons? Have current agendas of identity and difference laid to rest the notional coherence of subjectivity to such an extent that the very problematic of national identity is no longer germane to the various discourses of cultural studies?

Certainly in the United Kingdom of the 1980s, nationalist ideologies, especially of the right in England, have been inordinately powerful.

Simultaneously, the National Left of Plaid Cymru in Wales, Irish Republicanism and Scottish Nationalism have advanced new and fundamental reappraisals within and between the peoples of the UK. A nation is delimited in some highly visible ways. In the UK as in many other countries, Quebec and Spain for example, a struggle for identity is fought over the language of road signs. Less clearly, because so much more familiar, the graphic design of motorway signs, their typography, shape, size and colour, describes the territorial boundaries of the national. Such infrastructural standardisation covers postage, currency, telecommunications, national transport systems and broadcasting too, just as national cultural infrastructures in the form of cinematheques, museums, archives and libraries as well as ministries and state organisations for arts and culture shape and inform the perception of the national. Yet many of these infrastructures combine, of necessity, with transnational systems of transport and communication, touring exhibitions and international scholarship, from parcels delivery to computer databasing. Interfacing may be as laborious as preparing a British car for a cross-channel holiday, or as simple as dialling STD codes across the globe, yet the effective limits of territorial definitions are apparent. No man is an island, no more so a nation, not even the water-lapped British Isles.

The cultural infrastructures of the metropolitan nations – national galleries, national libraries, national theatres, national cinematheques, etc – are remarkable for their cultural pluralism. No culture is excluded from their collections and performances. And yet there is a fear that a double standard operates. On the one hand there is



'Three Crowns of a Sailor' (Raúl Ruiz, 1982): Zuzana M Pick, page 46

Culture, that which marked out the spaces of pan-European art and literature as the unitary, identity-producing machinery of civilisation. On the other lie cultures: the plurality of menial ways of life and their artefacts, carried as a foil to the grandeur of the West, as proofs of the power of imperialism, as markers of the stages in the narrative of progress. European culture transcends national boundaries: menial cultures are heavily circumscribed, by locality, history, status.

The national is a process of remembering, a pulling together and reassemblage of its members – both citizens and organs – into a novel whole. It is a continuing process, incomplete, presenting itself none the less as eternal even as it attempts over and again to ossify history into tradition. Thus its institutions are monumental, yet subject

to constant rehousing, recataloguing, reprogramming. At any given moment, for a given visit, the Tate Gallery or the British Library will seem to hold in regimes of the archive a fixity of cultural capital. Yet a second visit always discovers a painting moved, a book reshelfed, whole segments of the collection absent. The individual members of such collections resist the imposed formation of unity. At the same time, however, there seems to be an infinite capacity to re-member each recalcitrant artefact within the protean form of Civilisation, a capacity enabled by the construction of cultural others.

Those others are themselves organised in specific forms – anthropological collections, museums of industrial history, archives of sub-cultures, the separation of 'dangerous' art (Blake

4 at the Tate, Courbet at the Musée D'Orsay)¹ from the canonical collections of official culture. Within each of these institutions, further narratives are inscribed – the formulas of progress in material culture documented by Annie E Coombes in the influential Pitt-Rivers Museum, the anthropologising and periodising formulations of popular cultural collections, the biographical singularity accorded to the radical artist.² And yet it is these 'marginal' collections which over and over spark the creative imaginations and cultural resistances of succeeding generations. As much as any other discourse, the museum's address is to active respondents, who can and do reformulate the experience on offer for themselves.

But as anyone who has spoken a foreign language while abroad, or even moved from zone to zone where English is spoken will testify, the most difficult vocabulary to acquire is the field of reference to the locally-specific. It is not enough to learn French: you have also to learn the procession of celebrities to whom almost any conversation beyond the purely technical will refer – comic strips, newsreaders, pop stars or footballers, catch-phrases and advertising slogans whose literal meanings are no guide to their cultural importance. This lexicon of the local is a greater bar to communication than the mechanics of the language itself, more defining of community and more resistant to translation. When such dialectical lexicons have developed at intensely geographically-specific levels, or at odds with the dominant culture, or within narrow communities of interest, the effect can be baffling. The micro-lects of regionally identified communities, of the gay scene or of the pigeon fanciers (and semioticians) are often unintelligible to outsiders because of the closedness of their specific histories and references, as much as for the accents and inflections peculiar to them.

The English language presents a specific problem which becomes a defining term of the modern: imperialism, which includes a reterritorialisation and hierarchisation of the imperial and the colonised tongues. The relation of the imperium, and of the imperial metropolis, to its regions and colonies, institutes a new dialectic of global and local. Simultaneously, the metonymy of 'tongue' introduces a dense complexity of language and the body. The provenance of speech within the body, its emergence into the social world, the

anxieties around glossolalia as it breaks into enunciation, the shift from the semiotic chora into language, all are constantly re-enacted in the accents of the colonised, or more specifically in the accents expected of the colonised by the coloniser, and the accents reserved for the representation of the colonised by the coloniser, as if it were in fact the glossolalia of the coloniser which is at stake, displaced metonymically on to the oppressed.

Nous autres: we are already other, made in the world of the speech of others, existing for ourselves only as we are constituted in the look of others. Plunging into the field of the visible, we can see only on the understanding that we too are seen, constituted in the world of vision. To simply exist, by and for oneself, is an impossibility. However, the fields of language and the visible are not fields of pure process – they are organised in discourses and regimes of 'visuality', structured in dominance. The metropolitan tendency is thus to gel towards an identification with the routes of power that traverse the production of meaning, to gravitate toward the dominant, and to take up positions within this regimented flux, positions within and determined as hierarchies of self and other.

This emerges powerfully in the construction of cultural histories, perhaps most of all in the contemporary curatorial practice of the large metropolitan galleries. 1989 exhibitions in London included Italian Art, one in a series of nationality-based shows at the Royal Academy; La France at the Hayward Gallery; and 100 Years of Russian Art at the Barbican. Contrast the title of another Hayward show: Art In Latin America. This is inaccurate: the art was *in* the Hayward, a particularly impersonal, almost windowless space in the cultural ghetto of London's South Bank Arts Centre, further from its origins than mere geography would indicate. In contrast to the European shows, the title suggests that Latin American art is an implant or 'at best a fascinating excrescence on to the main body of Europe and North America, a benign growth (unlike politics) with peculiar attributes all of its own, but no real

¹ Cf Patricia Mainardi, 'Postmodern History at the Musée D'Orsay', *October* 41, Summer 1987.

² Annie E Coombes, 'Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities', *The Oxford Art Journal*, 11:2, 1988.

autonomy and certainly no possibilities of impact beyond its own boundaries'.³

Moreover, the inference is that this is an art of context, where the art of the metropolis is self-sufficient in a Coleridgean sense. Curiously, *Photographic Art in Britain*, another 1989 Barbican exhibition, also uses the preposition 'in', again a deprecatory gesture, as if to acknowledge the centrality of the documentary impulse in British photographic history and the importance of the contextual in photography, given its minor status among the fine arts. What we witness in these examples is the elaboration of hierarchies, in which the national is an important, though by no means the only mode of organisation.

What is at stake here is the way in which 'we ourselves' become 'we others'. The Latin American show is to be welcomed, if only because the metropolitan culture is so immensely impoverished by the strategic absences, eliminations, forgettings and marginalisations by which it structures its own monolithic and mono-tonous presence. As Paul Willemsen argues in an important essay, 'One must be "other" oneself if anything is to be learned about the meaning of limits, or borderlines, ie, of the areas where the most intense and productive life of the culture takes place'.⁴

Honi soit

O'Neill saw Queen Molly's pants

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the nation state is a fact of life. National boundaries are the purely imaginary maps defended to the death by the historically novel communities described by Benedict Anderson.⁵ Moreover, the metaphor of the border apparent in the title of Baddeley and Fraser's book or in the above quote from Willemsen has become a central one in contemporary cultural analysis, testifying to the continued resonance of the territorial. Whether perched on the line, or investigating the spaces within it, or traversing it, the border figures in our rhetoric far more than more obvious and material thresholds – the shoreline, the epidermis, the lips...

But if the borderline has an imaginary function as the icon of the relation of identity and space, and a symbolic role in an emotive rhetoric that

runs even through the highly self-conscious discourses of materialist cultural critique, it also has a brutal actuality in the actions of the nation state. In the momentary paranoia as you walk through the green channel at the customs depot, in the gun turrets of the Berlin Wall, are marked the end of metaphysics and the beginning of a specific conjuncture of power and submission. Within the domains open to it, the metropolitan state urges acceptance of difference as a physical and physiologically experienced regime. The British state is as impressive as any other in this regard.

The arrest of the poet William Blake for allegedly sketching defenses against Napoleonic invasion, the arrest of Pound and Yeats as foreign spies, the British occupation's ban on Ernst's *Der Ventilator* in 1919 predate, prefigure and underpin the relation of the British state to the surrounding culture: it is entirely negative. This negative definition of identity, when operated by an imperialist state, is no more metaphysics: cultural difference is enacted in violence against its own citizens as much as it is against foreigners. Culture as a whole is foreign to the British state: witness the 1988 Education Reform Act which alone among contemporary education documents refers to modern languages as 'foreign'. The term recurs in relation to history, in combination with 'the British way of life'. The cultural life of the peoples of the UK, from football fans to Ian Hamilton Finlay, takes place only on opposition to state culture, whose highest acolyte is the ex-disgraced ex-leader of the Tory Party, the pulp novelist Jeffrey Archer, whose name itself is synonymous with the middle-class banalities of the BBC's longest-running radio soap.

Official culture operates not so much through marginalisation as through denial – dropping artists, filmmakers, writers... The elimination of Peter Watkins, director of *The War Game* and *Culloden*, might be a case in point. So would the shameful enactment of the anti-gay Section 29 legislation, forbidding local government 'promotion' of homosexuality. Scare quotes emerge as

³ Oriana Baddeley and Valerie Fraser, *Drawing the Line: Art and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Latin America*, London, Verso, 1989, p2.

⁴ Paul Willemsen, 'Towards a Third Cinema? Notes and Queries' in *Framework* 34, p34.

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.

6 major tools for the writer, language used at the level of irony, so deeply has it been rewritten by a legislature that, finally, places itself beyond the culture of its people.

Section 29 of the Local Government Act refers to homosexuality as a 'pretended family relation'. The family has become a state signifier, whatever importance its referent, lived family relations, may have among oppressed peoples in the UK. This state signifier elides sexuality, just as its key icon, the Royal Family, is intended to. Joyce's sordid gloss on the monarch's French motto (*Honi soit qui mal y pense*, shamed be he who thinks ill thereof) reveals the repression engaged in the centrality of shame to British culture – and I use the term 'British' to refer to the state's officially-sanctioned cultural forms. Nothing so characterises the admixture of embarrassment and prurience which defines British culture as the obsessive reproduction of a leggy press photo of the sun shining through the summer frock of Lady Diana Spencer, now Princess of Wales. The flutter of revelation and hiding, the oscillation between the innocent and the dirty, the emblem of male desire and the immaculate conception, typify the fetishism which underpins the British family. State advertising on Aids, almost indescribably mystifying, compounds this terror in the face of sexuality on the part of the government, the effective criminalisation of virtually all sexual practices. Even the most effective satire, Alan Bennett's script for *A Private Function* for example, cannot, to coin a phrase, penetrate the seemingly puncture-proof epidermis of the ruling class. Why are the rulers of the superpowers so manifestly not sexually active? *Honi soit*.

Monsters and aliens play at the edge of the culture, but increasingly also at its heart: gremlins, cuckoos in the nest. Metaphors of violation roll through the culture in a thousand forms, and the figure of the inviolable Briton urges itself on us from Hearts of Oak to the privatisation of nuclear power. The clean, the impenetrable, the stalwart ride through official culture just as the slasher, the rapist and the junkie form the obverse of British identity. That which is soft – American chewing gum, milk bars and Frank Sinatra for Hoggart in the 1950s; homosexuality, drugs and intellectuals in the 1980s – is despised. We praise 'harsh' realities, 'tough' decisions. We despise featherbedding, safety nets, soft landings. A process that

began with Jane Austen's dichotomy of sense and sensibility has achieved a kind of malicious brilliance in monetarism.

In this binary of the hard and the soft, representative figures of resistance and opposition have been accelerated into the latter: 1984/85 caricatures of Arthur Scargill, leader of the miners, imbue him with abnormally large lips to emphasise just this central binary of the hard and the soft. The mockery of the 'feminist' man is based not so much on his approximation to homosexual stereotypes as that both can be read against the operant divide: unquestioning self-assertion versus the admission of vulnerability; the active/good and the passive/ungood; machos and wimps. So much of our work in media studies has been involved in refuting the notion of passive viewing that the operation of this binary construct has all but slipped by us. What is so morally reprehensible about slumping in front of the TV as a purely sensual consciousness? Who said lean was synonymous with athletic? When did bodies become better for becoming technologised ('Like a sex machine': James Brown)? The formation of a British identity is premised on the repression of sensuality, that fundamental loss which returns over and over as the cheerless inmixing of sentiment and brutality.

Caveat redemptor

It is scarcely novel to set about such a critique of British nationalism. What does appear new and potentially radical is the 'solution' of Europe 1992, the promise of a pan-European state premised on a twelve-nation free market, with all the contradictions engaged by Morley and Robbins in this issue. In the epochal movements in Eastern Europe, and the great symbolic breaching of the Berlin Wall, the centrality of the European Economic Community to the future of the continent seems sealed. That a third Great Power might emerge between the Russians and the North Americans should be a ground for rejoicing. The foot-dragging stance of the British government, notoriously in thrall to the 'special relationship' with the United States, confirms a socialist belief in the importance of pan-European capitalism as a necessary step on the paths of history. A new internationalism beckons on the far side of a rebirth on

transnationalism in the reformulated map of global policy in the 1990s. Some kind of political gains need to be made, surely, from the concentration of capital that will undoubtedly characterise the Europe of the 1990s? How else will we face up to 'our' competitors? In the smaller worlds of TV and film production and of academia, is this not to be the decade of European coproduction?

Yet the metropolitan countries have too another set of relations, perhaps more deeply seated and more definitive: their relations to the ex-colonial countries, the debtor nations whose poverty increases as the concentration of wealth in ever-fewer hands increases. Rhetorically, we like to speak of them in terms of history: they are 'legacies' which 'haunt' us – the ghosts of wealth. Black Audio Film Collective's recent feature *Testament*, which we had hoped to review at length in this issue, raises many of the issues which pan-Europeanism elides: how do you make a film between cultures?

The problem is perhaps best summed up in the acting, and the direction of actors. It's not just that *Testament* shares the reluctance of British political filmmakers to accept the dominance of Method acting or Shakespearian theatricalism. There is a more fundamental, and more specific, issue at stake. How is the experience of exile to be made visible? How, if not in the skills that you no longer apply: in the clumsy halfway house between Kwesi Owosu's culture of orature and performance and the reticent properties of British film acting.⁶ The lead performance in *Testament*, though at first hard to take, and at moments severely painful, is superbly well-judged: this is the hinterland between home and away.

Revolving about the history of Ghana, from the coup against Kwame Nkrumah to the present, *Testament* deploys an other figure, as important to the history of Black struggles in the 20th century as it is to the Latin American experience analysed here by Zuzanna M Pick, and central too to the experience of literary modernity in Europe (Pound, Joyce, Brecht, Gide...): the figure of exile. There is the drama of the moment of leaving; there is the time spent in a foreign country, but there is also the pain described by Latin American *desexilios*, those who return, and suffer a strange nostalgia for the times and places of exile. *Testament* deals most closely with the latter, through the figure of a TV journalist returning to Ghana to

trace old friends and common histories, only to find that 'home' is no longer as it once was, or that she has changed, or that the decision to fly was itself an irreversible moment of choice which separates her from her contemporaries.

This is a film of extraordinary beauty, but its beauty is a product of the disequilibrium between characters, between the characters and the landscape, between the landscape and the soundtrack (a remarkable composition in its own right). Rivers, we are told in the opening titles, are Ga gods and goddesses. The film opens with a man walking fully-clothed into a river. Is he trying to walk on the water, or trying to drown himself? The ambiguity weighs on the whole film, as flashbacks to the heroine's minute of decision (and her colleagues in the ideological school's decisions to stay) mix with cuts to archive footage of the coup. Characters move across the screen, fractured and uneven within themselves and between each other: the TV journalist's trade is words, but her old friend will not speak. Another ex-comrade can tell Ghana's history through lottery tickets and the science of coincidence. A third has turned to a mystical form of Islam. Reality is resistant to memory and identity.

The narrative moves in fits and starts, vignettes, performances. A troupe of women sing ancient songs of struggle and renewal, of pride: as if, like the rivers, history was always the same, always changing. Yet they are never in frame with the journalist, who instead visits the site of Herzog's shoot for *Cobra Verde*, where the plaster skulls studding mud walls demonstrate the persistence of the old colonial nightmare of the Dark Continent, the Heart of Darkness. There is no Ghanaian 'national identity' here, but its fragments, or perhaps a series of movements and processes, rather than a fixed or transcendental essence. Throughout, from time to time, a sequence returns like a nightmare: images of Siamese twins, and later of the twins separated surgically. This is the cruel cut of exile, the experience of the refugee and of diaspora, as irreversible as the surgeon's knife. Yet it is within this cruel universe that the beauty and poetry of *Testament* becomes possible. It is not only about that experience of otherness: through

⁶ Cf Kwesi Owosu, *The Struggle for Black Arts in Britain: What We Can Consider Better Than Freedom*, Comedia, 1986.

8 its passionate and intelligent attention to sound and image, it produces the conditions, at least for this white viewer, for passing beyond the tawdry policing of Britishness, into a far more critical, politicised, and – is this too Utopian? – carnival-esque disruption of the hideous givenness of identity.

If it is true that regimes of truth and power depend upon the abjection of the subject, as de Certeau argues, how much more is this true of the construction of national identity, with its endless call for sacrifice, self-sacrifice, the sacrifice of the self.⁷ It is only through its sacrifice that the self becomes truly national, truly identical. National identity is founded upon this loss of the subject, its total subsumption within an overarching discourse of truth, of identity as sameness. That this is not the same process which underpins the decentring of the subject should be clear: the difference lies in the subservience of subjectivity to a fully formed other in the former and its bewildered lack of position in the latter. The dialectic might be expressed as one between subjection to the reproduction of the dominant in the one case, and processual positioning within productivity in the other. The raw materials may be the same: the procedures and the positions in regimes of power, however, are as far apart as the Hollywood studio and the scratching video artist.

Politically, we might re-express this as a shift from a dialectic of the transnational/international to that dialectic of local and global which characterises the most successful new political stance of the 1980s, the ecological movement. Because it holds out the promise of an understanding of the place of local conditions in a global system, green politics have captured an extraordinary position in the practical political imaginations of a generation. The equally startling impact of the Bakhtin circle in the same period, especially of Volosinov's insistence on the primacy of *parole* over *langue*, offers a parallel thesis on the responsibility of individuals, in however miniscule a fashion, for ultimately global effects in every act of speech.⁸ From this nexus emerges a possible theoretical position from which the issue of identity is once more thrown into play. An ethics (including the inspired deployment of an ethics of shopping) built on the cumulative effect of determinate but productive actions and struggles is founded in the relations of consumer choices, work practices and

speech acts at the personal and local levels to all the adjoining systems and to the global. On the one hand we consider the production of identity, especially in the framework of the national, as an effect of the denial of sensuous, decentred subjectivity. On the other, we understand national identity as an insistence on mastery – of human beings over the environment and of the hegemonic over the discursive. Engaging with the productivity of individual acts, discursive or environmental, offers a new perspective on the status of individual and collective responsibility for and ability to dismantle the monolithic constructions of nations and transnationals.

SEAN CUBITT

⁷ 'The Institution of Rot' in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, Manchester University Press, 1986, pp35-46.

⁸ Cf, for example, V N Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Harvard University Press, 1986, pp65-82.

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**SPECIAL ISSUE ON
MINORITIES IN GERMAN CULTURE**

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SPACES OF IDENTITY: COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF EUROPE

BY DAVID MORLEY AND KEVIN ROBINS

*as Europe is my own imagination
– many shall see her,
many shall not –
though it's only the old familiar world
and not some abstract mystical dream.*
Allen Ginsberg

Introduction

AS WE MOVE towards the Single European Market, many voices speak of 'Europe'. What is this dream of a European identity, and what role is to be ascribed to satellite or other new communications technologies in the construction of European cultural identities?

This paper examines the processes through which cultural identities are produced and consumed, at both macro and micro levels. We argue for a reconceptualisation of cultural identity – not as a given object on which new technologies have 'effects' but rather as itself a product of specific cultural technologies, which are the site of contradictory tendencies and interests. If this is so, then the production, maintenance and reconstitution of cultural identity is to be seen as a continuously problematic process. Further, the paper argues that a cultural identity must be defined, not by its positive content, but always by its relation to, and differentiation from, other cultural identities.

The first question is about how we define ourselves, by distinguishing ourselves from the Other. The second and consequent question then concerns who the significant Others are against whom (and in relation to whom) a given person or group is defined. Not surprisingly, at this point we have some remarks to make on the question of how European cultural identities have been defined in relation to images of 'America'. The key questions then become those of power, boundary-marking and exclusion processes – both nationally and internationally. On this basis

(where identity is crucially about difference) the politics of identity is then examined, in terms of the contemporary re-invention of tradition and re-evaluation of 'heritage' in various European contexts. It is in this light that the paper touches on the questions of race and ethnicity, as major issues confronting contemporary debate about the definition of European culture.

However, beyond these macro questions about the changing relations of place and identity in the emerging postmodern geography of Europe, the paper also addresses the need to articulate our analysis of these issues with the analysis of the quotidian – with the micro-processes through which these larger structures are lived and experienced. Thus, we address the potential impact of new communications technologies from the point of view of their domestic users and audiences, and argue that the question is how, for example, new patterns of supply of television programming will be filtered and mediated by the process of domestic consumption. The key issues concern the role of these new technologies in disrupting established boundaries – both at the national and domestic levels – and in rearticulating the private and public spheres in new ways. The paper's thesis is that arguments about the creation of new image spaces and cultural identities must ultimately be grounded in the analysis of the everyday practices and domestic rituals through which contemporary electronic communities are constituted and reconstituted on a daily basis.

Communications technologies and European identities

In a recent paper, Richard Collins takes as his starting point the remark made by a French independent producer, speaking at a trade forum in Toronto, that nowadays 'Television is in colour, in stereo and in English'.¹ In a similar vein, the Latin American novelist Manuel Puig recalls that viewing Hollywood films in Argentina led him to conclude 'at one point in my childhood . . . that reality was spoken in English and came sub-titled'. We might also recall that, when asked for his opinion of European civilisation, Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have replied only that he thought that 'it would be a very good idea'.

Contemporary technological developments, and particularly the emergence of satellite television, have given a new urgency to the debates surrounding the questions of cultural imperialism, information flows and image markets. It is now extremely difficult for nation states to police the circulation of electronic products, precisely because they assume no material form (unlike films or books) with which a customs post can deal. Satellite broadcasting threatens to undermine the very basis of present policies for the policing of national space. Collins notes further that the emergence of satellite television has been argued to pre-empt the 'Canadianisation of European television'.² It is broadly felt that these new technologies have disturbing and damaging implications

¹ Robert Nador, quoted in Richard Collins, 'National Culture: A Contradiction in Terms?', Paper presented to the International Television Studies Conference, London, July 1988, p 1.

² *ibid*, p 20.

³ Richard Peet, 'The Destruction of Regional Cultures', in R J Johnston and P J Taylor (eds), *A World in Crisis? Geographical Perspectives*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986, p 169.

⁴ Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus, 'Reasons for the US Dominance of the International Trade in Television Programmes', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol 10, no 4, 1988, p 512.

⁵ Commission of the European Communities, 'Towards a Large European Audio-Visual Market', *European File*, 4/88, 1988, p 4.

⁶ Commission of the European Communities, *Television Without Frontiers*, COM(84) 300 final, Brussels, Commission of the European Communities, 1984, p 28.

for established national (and indeed continental) identities. There is a common fear of both their potential to disaggregate fixed national audiences and communities and to create new ones across national boundaries.

The exploding empires of communications moguls like Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell, Leo Kirch and Silvio Berlusconi are undeniably potent forces in the world, and it is hardly surprising that many observers attribute them with absolute powers. Thus, it is argued by Richard Peet that 'the tendency is towards the production of one world mind, one world culture, and the consequent disappearance of regional consciousness flowing from the local specificities of the human past'.³ These global media are often seen as unproblematically capturing the hearts and minds of their audiences and producing an increasingly homogeneous global consciousness and culture.

The United States entertainment industry was, in 1986, second only to aerospace in terms of its trade surplus of \$4.9 billions.⁴ The US is paramount in television production and trade. Overall, we must take very seriously the question of cultural power and domination in the contemporary world. It is in this context that recent debates in Europe have focused on the question of the need for integration (the 'Single Market' of 1992) as a response to the economic power of the US and Japan, to the emerging challenge of the so-called newly industrialising countries of South East Asia and Latin America, and also to the dramatic changes taking place in Eastern Europe. A strategic response must be found to a new hypermobile capital that has broken national bounds and undermined national sovereignties. And sense must be made of the information grids and image spaces that are increasingly creating new transnational communication spheres, markets and communities. The problem is that those strategies which, in response to the perceived threat of 'cocacolonisation' seek to sustain and defend a sense of 'European identity', often mobilise a 'Fortress Europe' mentality of a quite reactionary nature.

Within the terms of the '1992' debate it has been argued that television has a particular role to play in 'promoting the cultural identity of Europe'; it is said to be able to 'help to develop a people's Europe through reinforcing the sense of belonging to a Community composed of countries which are different yet partake of a deep solidarity'.⁵ Television, it is suggested, can actually be an instrument of integration. 'Television', the Commission maintains, 'will play an important part in developing and nurturing awareness of the rich variety of Europe's common cultural and historical heritage. The dissemination of information across national borders can do much to help the people of Europe to recognise the common destiny they share in many areas'.⁶

Thus the European Commission stresses the 'essential' nature of our 'Common European identity':

European culture is marked by its diversity of climate, countryside, architec-

ture, language, beliefs, taste and artistic style. Such diversity must be protected, not diluted. It represents one of the chief sources of the wealth of our continent. But underlying this variety there is an affinity, a family likeness, a common European identity. Down the ages, the tension between the continent's cultural diversity and unity has helped to fuse ancient and modern, traditional and progressive. It is undoubtedly a source of the greatness of the best elements of our civilisation.⁷

But how adequately does this come to terms with the changing geographies of this *fin de siècle*? Are the new communications media really so unproblematically and straightforwardly instrumental in promoting a cohesive and coherent Europe for the 21st century? It can, in fact, be argued that what the European Commission is seeking to revitalise and reactivate is a sense of European identity associated with the heritage of 'Western Civilisation'. In the aftermath of President Mitterrand's nightmare that a European will soon be defined as someone who watches American soap operas on a Japanese television set, what is being ideologically mobilised is the gravity of Graeco-Roman cultural tradition. What is being invoked is a common history and destiny grounded in the presumption of the moral, political, aesthetic and scientific superiority of the European continent. The present push for economic, political and cultural unity 'is an attempt to refurbish the old image of princess Europa as wealthy, free and powerful'.⁸

The vanity of that approach is well caught in Baudrillard's observations:

Once a nation and a culture have been centralised by a solid historical process, they experience insurmountable difficulties when they attempt either to create viable sub-units or to integrate themselves into some coherent larger entity. . . . Hence the difficulties currently being encountered in the attempt to find a European spirit and culture, a European dynamism. Inability to produce a federal event [Europe], a local event [decentralisation], a racial event [multiracialism]. Too entangled by our history, we can only produce an apologetic centralism [a Clochmerle pluralism] and an apologetic mixing [our soft racism].⁹

However, before pursuing the more obvious political and policy issues it may be useful to pose some different questions, at a more theoretical level, concerning the terms in which these debates have so far been conducted.

The construction of cultural identities

Up to the present, many of the debates surrounding the questions of cultural identity and cultural imperialism have functioned with a largely uninterrogated model of what cultural identities are. On the whole, the question has been posed (with varying degrees of technological determinism) as one of the impact or potential impact of a new technology

⁷ Commission of the European Communities, 'The Community of Culture', *European File*, 5/83, 1983, p 1.

⁸ John Keane, 'Identikit Europe', *Marxism Today*, April 1989, p 30.

⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *America*, London, Verso, p 83.

¹⁰ Philip Schlesinger, 'On National Identity: Some Conceptions and Misconceptions Criticised', *Social Science Information*, vol 26, no 2, 1987, p 234.

¹¹ James Donald, 'How English Is It? Popular Literature and National Culture', *New Formations*, no 6, p 32.

¹² *ibid*, p 35.

¹³ See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, London, Fontana, 1974.

¹⁴ Philip Schlesinger, *op cit*, p 235.

(for example, satellite broadcasting) on a set of pre-given objects (national or cultural identities). We want to suggest that that is a badly-posed question, and that rather than searching for a better answer to that question, we might be better advised to try, in the first instance, to formulate a better question.

One way of beginning to reformulate the questions at issue into more productive terms is offered by Philip Schlesinger, who has recently argued that in communications research, collective identity has functioned as a residual category. He argues that we now need to turn around the terms of the conventional assessment: 'not to start with communication and its supposed effects on national identity and culture, but rather to begin by posing the problem of national identity itself, to ask how it might be analysed and what importance communications practices might have in its *constitution*'.¹⁰

Similarly, James Donald has argued that we might usefully focus on the apparatuses of discourse, technologies and institutions which produce what is generally recognised as 'national culture'. The nation, he suggests, 'is an effect of these cultural technologies, not their origin. A nation does not express itself through its culture: it is cultural apparatuses that produce "the nation"'.¹¹ Thus Donald argues for reconceptualising the production of the national culture in terms of the effects of cultural technologies. This is no abstract process: "Literature", "nation", "people" . . . are never . . . purely conceptual. They exist only as they are instituted through education, publishing, the press, the media, the Arts Council and other such institutions . . .'.¹²

Rather than analysing cultural identities one by one and then, subsequently (as an optional move), thinking about how they are related to each other (through relations of alliance or opposition, domination or subordination), we must grasp how these identities, in Saussure's terms, are originally constructed in and through their relations to each other.¹³ Thus, to make the argument more concrete, it is inappropriate to start by trying to define 'European culture', for example, and then subsequently analysing its relations to other cultural identities. Rather, from this perspective, 'European culture' is seen to be constituted precisely through its distinctions/oppositions to American culture, Asian culture, Islamic culture, and so on. Thus, difference is constitutive of identity. Again Schlesinger offers a useful formulation. He argues that identity is as much about exclusion as about inclusion and that the 'critical factor for defining the ethnic group therefore becomes the social *boundary* which defines the group with respect to other groups . . . not the cultural reality within those borders'.¹⁴

Schlesinger's argument is that, viewed in this way, collective identity is based on the (selective) processes of memory, so that a given group recognises itself through its recollection of a common past. Thus, he argues, we can develop a dynamic view of identity – focusing on the ability of social and ethnic groups to continually recompose and redefine their boundaries.

From this perspective, then, national identity is a specific form of collective identity:

*All identities are constituted within a system of social relations and require the reciprocal recognition of others. Identity... is not to be considered a 'thing' but rather a 'system of relations and representations'... the maintenance of an agent's identity is... a continual process of recomposition rather than a given one, in which the two constitutive dimensions of self-identification and affirmation of difference are continually locked... identity is seen as a dynamic emergent aspect of collective action.*¹⁵

In a similar vein John Hartley has argued that nations cannot be understood in terms simply of their own, supposedly intrinsic and essential features, but only in relational terms, each nation being defined by its relations to other nations.¹⁶ Difference is thus at the heart of the issue, a point well made by Donald in his analysis of popular fictions. Donald's point is that these popular fictions speak to fundamental psychic processes, and attention to them can help us to make sense of what he calls the 'paranoid strand in popular culture, the clinging to familiar polarities and the horror of difference'.

*Manifest in racism, its violent misogyny, and its phobias about alien culture, alien ideologies and 'enemies within' is the terror that without the known boundaries, everything will collapse into undifferentiated, miasmic chaos; that identity will disintegrate; that "I" will be suffocated or swamped.*¹⁷

This is the fear at the heart of the question of identity – whether posed at the level of the individual or of the nation. Driven by such fears, as the Matterlarts have noted, the defence of a given 'cultural identity' easily slips into the most hackneyed nationalism, or even racism, and the nationalist affirmation of the superiority of one group over another.¹⁸ The question is not abstract: it is a matter of the relative power of different groups to define their own identities, and of the ability to mobilise these definitions through their control of cultural institutions. Here we enter the terrain of what is referred to as the invention of tradition. Tradition is not a matter of a fixed and given set of beliefs or practices which are handed down or accepted passively. Rather, as Patrick Wright has argued, tradition is very much a matter of present day politics and of the way in which powerful institutions function to select particular values from the past and to mobilise them in contemporary practices.¹⁹ Through such mechanisms of cultural reproduction, a particular version of the collective memory and thus a particular sense of national and cultural identity, is produced.

¹⁵ *ibid*, pp 236-237.

¹⁶ John Hartley, 'Invisible Fictions', *Textual Practice*, vol 1, no 2, 1987.

¹⁷ James Donald, *op cit*, p 44.

¹⁸ Armand Mattelart *et al*, *International Image Markets*, London, Comedia, 1984.

¹⁹ Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, London, Verso, 1985; see also Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

²⁰ Stuart Hood, 'The Couthy Feeling', *New Statesman and Society*, 12 August 1988, pp 30-31.

²¹ Raphael Samuel, 'Little Englandism Today', *New Statesman and Society*, 21 October 1988.

²² Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, London, Hutchinson, 1986.

²³ A Sivanandan, 'The New Racism', *New Statesman and Society*, 4 November 1988.

As Stuart Hood has argued, 'cultural nationalism assumes that nations are monolithic and denies the importance of subcultures based on regionalism and class within the political unity of the nation'. His fundamental point concerns the way in which the cultural identity of Britain has been constructed so as to deny the relations of power which exist between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as the constituent parts of the 'United Kingdom'. Britain's cultural identity is, in fact, formulated around the cultural identity of its dominant English part. At root, this is an expression of a 'dangerous tradition of envious, fearful nationalism' which is both jingoistic and xenophobic (and indeed racist) and which 'looks for and finds outlets for its fears and rages in attacks on those who are different'.²⁰

A key process in play in contemporary British cultural life is one in which a romantically sanitised version of the English/British past is being busily re-created: a quite reactionary vision of pastoral England/Albion. Raphael Samuel describes this as the creation of a 'born-again cultural nationalism', which operates across a number of fields.²¹ Thus we see the boom in the conservation and heritage movement; the re-evaluation of English landscape painting; educational reforms aimed at returning to 'traditional standards' in English and history as core components of the curriculum; in the realm of fashion, a return to 'fashionably old-fashioned' styles; and in the realm of physical construction, a return to the use of 'traditional materials', as Habitat replaces its Scandinavian pine with 'traditional English kitchen furniture' and Covent Garden's new shopping piazza is re-created as a Dickensian walk down England's memory lanes, past shops offering 'traditional fare' in a picturesque nightmare of time undone. Samuel cuttingly defines this overall tendency as operating within the context of a 'defence of national tradition against European intellectual history . . . a kind of (upper) class revenge for the "modernisation" [read "Europeanisation" – DM/KR] of the 1960s'.

However, there is an unspoken issue here – the question of race. The 'England' being reconstructed in this way is being reconstructed around a tradition which is unproblematically white, a tradition which 'tends towards a morbid celebration of England and Englishness from which blacks are systematically excluded'.²² The point is, of course, by no means exclusive to the English context. Indeed it may well be, as Sivanandan argues, that we shall in the near future see a gradual shift from national and ethnocentric forms of racism to Eurocentric or pan-European forms of racism.²³ Yasmin Alibhai has noted that there is 'a respectable xenophobia mushrooming all over the continent that is pushing some of the collective dreams for 1992 to cluster around a concept of Europe which is white, racist and much more powerful than any post-war individual state'. National identities are being transformed into a 'white continentalism'. European unity is being defined against

'alien' culture and around a self-image of European superiority. This she sees in Mrs Thatcher's recent invocation of a common experience rooted in the colonial history of the European nation states. In her Bruges speech, the British Prime Minister could confidently and unashamedly declare 'the story of how Europeans explored and colonised and – yes, without apology – civilised much of the world' to be 'an extraordinary tale of talent, skill and courage'. As Alibhai concludes, all this 'raises a central and neglected question: where do non-white Europeans fall within such a vision?'²⁴

To address these issues is, inevitably, to raise 'the deep, the profoundly perturbed and perturbing question of our relationship to others – other cultures, other states, other histories, other experiences, traditions, people and destinies'.²⁵ It is to raise the question of how our historical relation to others has been transformed into an ontological relation to the Other. Edward Said has described this in terms of the European discourse on Orientalism, 'a collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans . . . the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures'.²⁶ The most fundamental challenge is to confront this relation of superior to subaltern identity that is embodied in the construction of Otherness. The question is whether it is possible to create a kind of communication and community that can acknowledge difference (and not simply diversity), whether there is a capacity to use difference as a resource rather than fear it as a threat.²⁷

Any meaningful European identity has to be created out of the recognition of difference, the acceptance of different ethnicities. What Stuart Hall writes of English ethnicity has relevance for wider European context: 'We have a great deal of work to do to *decouple* ethnicity, as it functions in the dominant discourse, from its equivalence with nationalism, imperialism, racism and the state, which are the points of attachment around which a distinctive British or, more accurately, English ethnicity have been constructed'.²⁸ European identity can no longer be, simply and unproblematically, a matter of Western intellectual and cultural traditions. As a consequence of its belligerent, imperialistic, and colonialist history, Europe now contains a rich diversity of cultures and identities. The question is whether ethnic (and also gendered) differences are disavowed and repressed, or whether they can be accepted, and accepted, moreover, in their difference.

Europe versus America: The vulgar politics of taste

'Europe can no longer be understood by starting out from Europe itself', writes Jean Baudrillard.²⁹ European identity must come to terms with its 'imaginary America' and with the 'spectre of Americanisation'. America plays a complicated part in the constitution of European cultural identity. In one respect it is 'anti-Europe'; it is mobilised as the

²⁴ Yasmin Alibhai, 'Community Whitewash', *Guardian*, 23 January 1989.

²⁵ Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonised: Anthropology's Interlocutors', *Critical Inquiry*, vol 15 no 2, 1989, p 216.

²⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, p 7.

²⁷ Rose-Marie Feraud-Royer, 'Conversations Publiques', *Annales de la Recherche Urbaine*, no 34, June-July 1987.

²⁸ Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in K Mercer (ed), *Black Film, British Cinema*, ICA Documents No 7, London, Institute of Contemporary Arts.

²⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *op cit*, p 98.

³⁰ See Duncan Webster, *Looka Yonder! The Imaginary America of Populist Culture*, London, Routledge, 1988.

³¹ Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, London, Comedia/Routledge, 1988, pp 52-53.

³² Lord Keynes, quoted in James Donald, *op cit*, p 32.

³³ Meaghan Morris, 'Asleep at the Wheel?' *New Statesman*, 26 June 1987.

³⁴ Harald Arni Wendelbo, 'What Audiences for European Television?' Paper presented to the International Television Studies Conference, London, 10-12 July 1986, p 15.

³⁵ Martin Walker 'The Boom across Borders', *Guardian*, 17 November.

³⁶ Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas*, London, Methuen, 1984, p 2.

paradigm of the traditionless, the land of the material not the cultural.³⁰ But it is also Europe's alter ego, an exaggerated reflection of what Europe fears it will become, or perhaps what Europe already is. A country with no past and therefore no real culture, America has become 'a paradigm for the future threatening every advanced industrial democracy in the world'.³¹ In this process, the great Satan of American anti-culture is counterposed to the comfortable values and traditions by which Europeans have understood and identified themselves, not only as 'Europeans', but also as 'cultured' and 'civilised'.

It is worth noting that all of this has a very long pedigree. We can find much the same sentiment being expressed, in the British context, in 1945, by Lord Keynes, then Chairman of the Arts Council:

*How satisfactory it would be if different parts of the citizenry would again walk their several ways as they once did. Let every part of Merry England be merry in its own way. Death to Hollywood!*³²

Even the most contemporary versions of the argument seem to have an oddly dated tone – as Meaghan Morris has remarked, Baudrillard's *America* reads rather like a new edition of De Tocqueville.³³

It is, of course, a problem which is more complex than Europe versus America. For one thing, 'American films, best selling books and such, were "European" long before any European media'.³⁴ The information industries of tomorrow, on both sides of the Atlantic, are already Euro-American in composition (*cf* the importance of the US-owned McCann Erikson advertising agency in Europe and, conversely, the strength of the Saatchi agency in the US market). This is the background to the 'cry to maintain a national character, against the mongrel commercialisation of a fake Europe which is half-American anyway'.³⁵

In spite of this convergence and even coalescence of American and European cultures, there is still a powerful imaginary desire to project them as alternatives. 'America' is invoked as a constant threat to the grandeur and purity of European culture and tradition. It is around the politics of taste that the essential differences between Europe and America have been assertively and obsessively invoked. Over the past decade, *Dallas* has functioned as the most obvious hate symbol of cultural erosion – as immortalised in Alastair Milne's fears that broadcasting deregulation would lead to the threat of 'wall-to-wall *Dallas*'. As Ien Ang puts it, the international popularity of *Dallas* was frequently offered as knock-down 'evidence of the threat posed by US style commercial culture to all authentic national cultures'.³⁶

These debates must be seen in the context of the long gestation of anti-Americanism in European culture. In the particular context of broadcasting and the communications industries, the current debate about the impact of commercial American television programmes in a Europe still dominated in many countries by traditional forms of public service programming can usefully be informed by consideration of the anti-

American rhetoric in debates surrounding the introduction of commercial television in Britain in the 1950s.

The BBC's broadcasting monopoly was originally granted at a time when the British cultural élite saw its position being undermined by the seemingly unstoppable flow of American popular culture – Hollywood, Tin Pan Alley, cheap American fiction. The role of the BBC was to maintain (under Lord Reith's stewardship) national standards in the face of this threat to the Great English Cultural Tradition. The problem was that, as soon as ITV was launched in the 1950s, offering new cultural forms based on elements of working-class and regional cultures (melodramas, irreverent presenters, non-standard accents) the working-class audience deserted the BBC in droves. As Geoff Mulgan and Ken Worpole put it, 'the BBC... by its refusal to engage with anything other than the cultural tradition of the Southern upper class, left a vast, vacant cultural space which the early entrepreneurs of ITV were only too happy to fill'.³⁷

On the whole, the dominance of American programming in the international television market had been explained by reference to the considerable economic advantages accruing to American producers, as a result of the huge scale of their domestic market. These advantages are, of course, considerable. But what if there is also something intrinsic to the products, which constitutes the basis of their appeal to working-class audiences in other countries? In his investigation of literary tastes among the British working class, Ken Worpole interviewed a number of men who recalled their pleasures in discovering American detective fiction writing in the 1930s. This is an ex-docker explaining why, for him, this American literature has a greater appeal than the writers of the English literary tradition:

*I read the English writers, H G Wells, Arnold Bennett... but they weren't my kind of people. You always had the edge of class there... What intrigued me about the American writers was they were talking the way we talked.*³⁸

The idea that English or European high culture is in danger of being swamped by a relentless deluge of Americana is not new. Dick Hebdige traces these fears back to at least the 1930s, when writers as different as the conservative Evelyn Waugh and the socialist George Orwell were united by a fascinated loathing for modern architecture, holiday camps, advertising, fast food, plastics and, of course, chewing gum. To both Waugh and Orwell, these were the images of the soft and enervating 'easy life' which threatened to smother British cultural identity. Similarly, Hoggart famously bemoaned the process through which authentic working-class life was being destroyed by the 'hollow brightness', the 'shiny barbarism' and 'spiritual decay' of imported American culture, which was leading to an 'aesthetic breakdown', in which traditional values were undermined and replaced by a 'Candy Floss World' of 'easy thrills and cheap fiction'.³⁹

³⁷ Geoff Mulgan and Ken Worpole, *Saturday Night or Sunday Morning*, London, Comedia, 1985, p 41.

³⁸ Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives*, London, Verso, 1983, p 30.

³⁹ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1958.

⁴⁰ Charlotte Brunsdon, 'Women Watching Television', Paper presented to the Women and the Electronic Media Conference, Copenhagen, April. See also Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other', in T Modleski (ed) *Studies in Entertainment*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988.

⁴¹ F R Leavis, quoted in Christopher Bigsby (ed) *Superculture: American Popular Culture and Europe*, London, Elek, 1975, p 6.

⁴² *ibid*, p 6.

⁴³ Dick Hebdige *op cit*, pp 65-66.

The images which Orwell and Hoggart use to characterise the damaging effects of American popular culture have a recurring theme: the 'feminisation' of the authentic muscle and masculinity of the British industrial working class. This masculinity they saw as under attack from an excess of Americana characterised essentially by passivity, leisure and domesticity – warmwater baths, sun bathing and the easy life. When the discussion of American programming is combined with the discussion of programming in the form of soap opera, principally understood as a feminine form in itself, we are clearly, from Hoggart's or Orwell's position, dealing with the lowest of the low, with what is seen as 'the trashiest trash'.⁴⁰

But what is it exactly that is being defended against this onslaught? In his classic attack on Americanisation, Leavis pointed to the 'rootlessness, the vacuity, the inhuman scale, the failure of organic cultural life, the anti-human reductivism [of] the American neo-imperialism of the computer'.⁴¹ In Leavis' case, at least, what is being defended is explicit: it is a reactionary vision of the authenticity of the national, organic, rural community. Our point is that many of those who seem to share Leavis' anti-Americanism are more vague and evasive about specifying the exact nature of their positive vision, but that, in the end, their position is often just as problematical as that of Leavis.

As Bigsby puts it, in a world where the modern experience has often been equated with an 'imaginary America',

*opposition to popular culture and complaints about Americanisation have often amounted to little more than laments over a changing world . . . where 'Americanisation' frequently means little more than the incidence of change and change, especially in new cultural forms, provokes established patterns of negative reaction. The new is characterised as brash, crude, unsubtle, mindless and [as Matthew Arnold insisted] destructive of taste and tradition.*⁴²

In Britain, the debate about popular culture, in the key period of the 1950s and 1960s, condensed around the question of the design and style of modern American products – and, especially, their streamlining – which was seen as vulgar (in bad taste) by reference to the established canons of European design. These streamlined products, especially American cars which were so (regretfully) popular among working-class consumers, were decried as decorative, decadent and excessive. American products were scorned by the British cultural élite as being merely 'the jazz of the draining board . . . products of a short-term, low-rent, chromium utopia'. And worst of all was the ever-popular Cadillac – whose tailfins were described as representing 'the Vietnam of product design'.⁴³

The problem for these critics was, of course, that the popularity of these products, while it might be decried and regretted, could not be

wished away. By breaking away from traditional, class-based notions of discreet good taste, these products did make genuine connections with the actual tastes and desires of large numbers of working-class people. For those consumers, these products represented positive symbols of a massive improvement in the material quality of their lives. For them, 'America' was a very positive symbol, functioning largely by opposition to what they perceived as the dead hand of traditional English culture, as defined by the cultural élite.

Like it or not, 'vulgar' American products – streamlined, plastic and glamorous – have been attractive to European audiences. Perhaps the problem is not really about a brash and material American culture, but rather about a fake antique Europe? American culture repositions frontiers – social, cultural, psychic, linguistic, geographical. America is now within. America is now part of a European cultural repertoire, part of European identity.

Perhaps, too, the substance of the American fantasy has now even been eroded. We argued earlier that identity is always as much a matter of difference as it is of similarities, and that what matters is to understand who is being differentiated from whom. For Europeans, 'America' has for so long provided the negative pole against which 'we' have defined ourselves that the terms of this debate have now acquired a certain historical fixity. Perhaps this is no longer adequate or appropriate to our present circumstances. While the European nations still struggle with and against their imaginary America, and while they still fight imaginary battles around and against the vulgar politics of taste, the terms are shifting yet again. As the pivot of the world economy swings from the Atlantic to the Pacific basin, a significant modification in the balance of economic power is taking place, whose impacts have begun to make themselves felt in the cultural sphere as well. Sony's purchase of CBS symbolises what may yet turn out to be an important realignment of international cultural forces, and the old cultural ramparts along Europe's Atlantic coast may well turn out to be facing in quite the wrong direction. In fact, European nations may now face the prospect of a different form of marginalisation from the world stage, a prospect that throws the threat of Americanisation into quite a new perspective.

Postmodern geographies

The advanced capitalist societies are in a period of profound structural transformation. For some this marks a shift from industrial to post-industrial society, for others, it is about the transition from organised to disorganised capitalism, and for others again it is characterised in terms of the historical trajectory from Fordism and massification to a flexible post-Fordist era. This transformation is characterised by quite contradictory developments and by a complex interweaving of change and continuity. Against those who would have us believe that the shape of

⁴⁴ Kevin Robins and Andrew Gillespie, 'Beyond Fordism? Place Space and Hyperspace', Paper presented to the International Conference on Information, Technology and the New Meaning of Space, Frankfurt, May 1988.

⁴⁵ Kevin Robins, 'Reimagined Communities: European Image Spaces, Beyond Fordism', *Cultural Studies*, vol 3, no 2, May 1989.

⁴⁶ Sarah Benton, 'Greys and Greens', *New Statesman and Society*, 2 June 1989.

⁴⁷ Claus-Dieter Rath, 'The Invisible Network: Television as an Institution in Everyday Life', in P Drummond and R Paterson (eds), *Television in Transition*, London, British Film Institute, 1985, p 203.

⁴⁸ Gabriel Dupuy, 'L'Eurovision ou le Conflit du Réseau et des Territoires', in H Bakis (ed), *Information et Organisation Spatiale*, Caen, Paradigme, 1988.

things to come is already clear, we must argue that the course of change is neither obvious, nor pre-determined, but remains a matter of contestation. What appears to be emerging in this process is a new articulation of spatial scales – of global, continental, national and local spheres – associated with the increasing transnationalisation of accumulation.⁴⁴ The worldwide organisation and integration of corporate activities is bringing about a more immediate and direct articulation of global and local spaces. Particular localities and cities are drawn into the logic of transnational networks. What appears to be developing through this process is a new global matrix of unevenly developed regions, cities and localities. And, in the context of this global-local interface, economic and political governance at the national scale becomes increasingly questionable.

The processes we are describing are not only economic, but also political and cultural, and have enormous resonances for collective organisation and identity in the late 20th century. The fundamental principle for political attachment in capitalist societies has been through national and nationalist identities, through citizenship of the nation state. This allegiance is now being increasingly undermined – the resurgence of national-populist ideologies in the 1980s may well be a rearguard response to this tendency – and we are seeing the emergence of both enlarged (continental European) and restricted (local, regional, provincial) conceptions of citizenship. New forms of bonding, belonging and involvement are being forged out of the global-local nexus. The most apparent tendency is, perhaps, towards a new or renewed localism. The key issue is whether such affiliations will necessarily be conservative, parochial and introspective, or whether it is possible to reimagine local communities in more cosmopolitan terms.⁴⁵ Recently, Sarah Benton has pointed to some of the possibilities and potential emerging from alliances between regionalist and Green politics in Europe.⁴⁶

While they should not be seen as the determinant and causal factor, it is undoubtedly the case that the new information and communications technologies are playing a powerful role in the emergence of new spatial structures, relations and orientations. Corporate communications networks have produced a global space of electronic information flows. The new media conglomerates are creating a global image space, a 'space of transmission [that] cuts across – as a new geographic entity, which has its own sovereignty, its own guarantors – the geographies of power, of social life, and of knowledge, which define the space of nationality and of culture'.⁴⁷ What the new technologies make possible is a new kind of relationship between place and space: through their capacity to transgress frontiers and subvert territories, they are implicated in a complex interplay of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.⁴⁸ What is particularly significant is the transformed relationship between boundary and space that this entails. Things are no longer defined and distinguished, in the ways that they once were, by their boundaries, borders, frontiers. We can say that the very idea of boundary – the frontier boundary of the

nation state, for example, or the physical boundaries of urban structures – has been rendered problematical. Paul Virilio suggests that technological and physical topologies become, in some way, continuous. The boundary has become permeable, an ‘osmotic membrane, through which information and communication flows pass’.⁴⁹ These global systems – information networks, satellite ‘footprints’ – also lay an abstract space over and across concrete territorial configurations. Consequently, older communities and older, localised, senses of community are undone. The question then is how network and community can be reconciled.⁵⁰ What can community be made to mean in this mediated world?

In discussing the question of European geographies it is as well to remember that it has never been entirely clear what that entity called ‘Europe’ is: the very definition of the term itself is a matter of history and politics. Once we depart the terrain of physical geography, the questions, naturally, become even more complex. As Banks and Collins argue, ‘European economic, political and cultural realms are not congruent . . . the single market of the EEC is not congruent with the cultural unities of Europe: three of Europe’s four German-speaking states are outside the EEC (though the largest is in it). The EEC’s two Anglophone states have the experience – unique among European states – of being subordinate members of their world language [and cultural] community and have, therefore, a “culture” that finds Paris more foreign than Boston, Hamburg further away than Melbourne’.⁵¹ Again, basic cultural issues are already at stake in these definitions. As Collins asks: ‘what will become of European culture should Turkey, an Islamic (albeit a modernised and secularised) state, join the community?’⁵²

As we argued earlier, the debate around European culture has largely been stimulated by a fear that heavy viewing of television programmes from other (principally American) cultures would, over time, erode the culture, values and traditions of the nations of Europe. Operating in response to this fear, current European Community (EC) initiatives can thus be seen as an attempt to intervene so as to (re)create a distinctive European culture – an enterprise which Collins describes as culminating in the ‘absurd spectacle of a retreat to the Middle Ages for a coherent vision of European identity’;⁵³ a retreat perhaps to the (distinctly pre-electronic) moment in which, as Donald argues, ‘the literary forms of the European languages provided the medium for the definition and diffusion of national vernaculars, in opposition to the transnational jargon of Latin and subnational regional dialects’.⁵⁴ The cultural politics at stake are of a quite contradictory character.

It may be that what is most apparent and remarkable in the present context is the accelerating formation of global communications empires, such as those of Murdoch, Maxwell, Berlusconi, Bertelsmann, Sony, Disney, Paramount, and so on. Internationalisation is not, of course, a new phenomenon; it has always been a constitutive aspect of capitalist development. But it is now entering a new stage, and the maintenance of national sovereignty and identity are becoming increasingly difficult as

⁴⁹ Paul Virilio, ‘The Overexposed City’, *Zone*, No 1/2, 1987, pp 17, 21.

⁵⁰ See Bernard Stiegler, ‘Reseaux et Communauté’, *Annales de la Recherche Urbaine*, no 34, 1987.

⁵¹ Marian Banks and Richard Collins, ‘Tradeable Information and the Transnational Market’, unpublished paper, CCIS, Polytechnic of Central London, 1989, p 10.

⁵² Richard Collins, *op cit*, p 17.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p 22.

⁵⁴ James Donald, *op cit*, p 33.

⁵⁵ Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000*, London, Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press, 1983, p 197.

⁵⁶ Raphael Samuel, op cit, p 30.

⁵⁷ Chardwick F Alger, 'Perceiving, Analysing and Coping with the Local-Global Nexus', *International Social Science Journal*, no 117, 1988, p 322.

⁵⁸ Manuel Castells, 'Crisis Planning and the Quality of Life: Managing the New Historical Relationships Between Space and Society', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol 1, no 1, 1983, p 16.

national sovereignty and identity are becoming increasingly difficult as the unities of economic and cultural production and consumption become increasingly transnational. It is now increasingly apparent, as Raymond Williams argued, that in the development of modern industrial societies, 'the nation state in its classical European forms is at once too large and too small for the range of real social purposes'.⁵⁵ In this new situation, we also need to focus on the new dialectic of local and global. In a world which seems to be increasingly dominated by a global cultural repertoire, new communities and identities are constantly being built and rebuilt. In many cases, it is a case of a fake and bogus sense of community:

*The more cosmopolitan capitalism becomes, the more it seems to wear a homespun look: the more nomadic its operations, the more it advertises its local affiliations . . . Geographically, the population may be becoming more mobile; imaginatively, it cleaves to a spirit of place. The pastoral version of the national myth – the idea that the "real England" is in the countryside – has never been more widely popular . . . The language of patriotism may be unfashionable but the appetite for roots – even make-believe ones – is unappeasable.*⁵⁶

But localism can also be a more positive force, an attempt to elaborate a creative local response to the invasive influence of global capital. If localities are increasingly nodes in the emerging global networks, then local consciousness and action may throw up new 'possibilities for more efficacious, and self-conscious, participation in world affairs by people in local communities'.⁵⁷ The politics of space and place is then crucial. The key question is whether national and nationalist identities can be transcended in favour of more meaningful identities, or whether they will simply transform in regressive and alienating ways. Some commentators foresee a prospect of increasing privatism, localism and 'cultural tribalism' within an electronic 'global village'. For Manuel Castells, the prospects are bleak. He foresees 'the coexistence of the monopoly of messages by the big networks and the increasingly narrow codes of local microcultures around their parochial cable TVs'. Thus, he argues, we see a process whereby the 'space of power' is transformed into image flows over which we have less and less control, while the 'space of meaning' is reduced to the 'microterritories' of new tribal communities.⁵⁸

Similarly, in their analysis of technologies and decentralisation, Mattelart and Piemme argue that small is not necessarily beautiful:

At a time when the sphere of capital is being globalised, the bourgeoisie thinks worldwide, while encouraging the petite-bourgeoisie to think local . . . The local seems to signify a return to the concrete, at the same time as the concrete it rediscovers takes us . . . further away from the possibility of understanding a vaster reality from which the concrete takes its meaning . . . The local is of

*real interest only where it permits... a better grasp... of the dialectic between the abstract/universal and the concrete/experienced.*⁵⁹

As broadcasting nations, the countries of Europe are, of course, not only different, but also, in various senses, at odds with each other. We might emphasise the advantageous position of the Anglophone states within the European Community (given the position of English as the *lingua franca* of the region). Thus, Britain is a significant exporter of television material to the rest of Europe, and is in a quite different relation to American programming than is the rest of Europe, by simple virtue of the shared and hegemonic language. Philip Schlesinger notes both how the 'Big Four' (Britain, France, West Germany and Italy) dominate all television exchanges within the European Broadcasting Union, and how the EBU itself exports three times as much to the East European International Radio and TV organisations (OIRT) as it imports.⁶⁰ There are, of course, historical issues at stake as well. As Walker noted in his recent analysis of the significance of the inauguration of the Single European Market in 1992, there are those within Europe who might well see 1992 as 'the last campaign, the third battle of the Ardennes, at which the Anglo-Saxons are finally defeated... and Britain takes its (humble) place within the Fourth (Deutschmark) Reich'.⁶¹ There are certainly those who foresee that 'a dynamic Europe should be built around the Franco-German duo'.⁶² As with the definition of national cultural identities, so too is the shaping of a European culture and identity centred around the relative power of different parties.

We must, of course, beware of taking for granted a particular set of assumptions, deriving from the Cold War period, that when we say Europe, what we really mean is Europe west of the Iron Curtain. Current talk of *Mittleuropa* and the Soviet call for a definition of our 'common European home' must necessarily be taken into account in our debates. There are also those who would want to make claims for the status of Budapest and Prague as the true centres, historically, of European culture.⁶³ We must also take into account both the changing nature of power relations within Eastern Europe and also of the changing relations between the 'two Europes'. Manuel Escudero, co-ordinator of the Spanish Socialist Party's 'Programme 2000', has predicted that 'the people of Eastern Europe [will] play the same kind of role for the EEC that the southern Europeans played in the 1960s and 1970s'.⁶⁴ More melodramatically, Neil Ascherson offers a scenario in which 'Europe in 2018 will consist of a Western superstate, whose floors are scrubbed by Rumanians and Poles, and a periphery of beggarly Bantustans'.⁶⁵

Degrees of Exportability

Within this broader context, let us now consider the central issue of the transnationalisation of culture – as a fundamental process in which the 'vertical' organisation of people within national communities is, (to

⁵⁹ Armand Mattelart and Jean-Marie Piemme, 'New Technologies, Decentralisation and Public Service', in A Mattelart and S Siegelau (eds), *Communication and Class Struggle*, Vol 2 New York, International General, 1983, p 415.

⁶⁰ Philip Schlesinger, 'Any Chance of Fabricating Eurofiction?' *Media, Culture and Society*, vol 8, no 1, January 1986.

⁶¹ Martin Walker, 'Fortress Vision of a Market Future', *Guardian*, 14 November 1988.

⁶² Peirre Berégovoy, French Finance Minister, quoted in Martin Walker, 'The Boom Across Borders', *op cit*.

⁶³ See Milan Kundera, 'A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out', *Granta*, no 11, 1984.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Martin Walker, 'Fortress Vision of a Market Future', *op cit*.

⁶⁵ Claus-Dieter Rath, *op cit*, p 202.

⁶⁷ Pam Mills, 'An International Audience?' *Media, Culture and Society*, vol 7, 1985, p 493.

⁶⁸ John Clemens, 'What Will Europe Watch?', *Journal of the Royal Television Society*, vol 24, no 6, 1987, pp 306-307.

⁶⁹ Richard Collins, 'The Peculiarities of English Satellite Television in Western Europe', Paper presented to the Programme on Information and Communications Technologies Conference, Brunel University, May 1989, p 11.

⁷⁰ Pam Mills, *op cit*, p 4.

⁷¹ Martin Walker, 'A Pigsty without Frontiers', *Guardian*, 15 November 1988.

varying extents, and in varying contexts) being supplanted by their organisation into 'horizontal' communities – people are connected electronically rather than by geographical proximity. In his analysis of the increasing significance of cross-border transmissions in creating electronic communities, Rath argues that 'frontiers of a national, regional or cultural kind no longer count: what counts much more is the boundary of the territory of transmission... which increasingly bears little relationship to the geographical territory of any given nation state'.⁶⁶

If we wish to avoid a form of technological determinism we should not, of course, presume that any of these technological developments will be uniform in their effects. In our view, the key questions concern the ways in which a range of social and cultural divisions (matters of generation and education, for example) inflect both the take-up and the cultural impact of the new communications technologies. Commercial broadcasters and their market research agencies are in a position, given their necessary sensitivity to questions of audience research, penetration rates, and the like, to throw some light on these questions from an empirical point of view.

There is, for example, already evidence that, within northern Europe, it is young people who are the heaviest viewers of satellite channels. Thus, in her summary of the empirical material available on the development of an international audience within Europe, Pam Mills notes 'the heightened appeal of imported programmes to young people. Older viewers are more likely to avoid imported programmes, for language and cultural reasons. Younger viewers are, however, increasingly familiar with foreign-language material'.⁶⁷ Similarly, in 1987, John Clemens reported AGB Television International's work as indicating that 'the high entertainment output (of Sky and Super Channel) is attracting the young Dutch audience and may well predict the pattern of the future', and that in Belgium, 'amongst children once again... (consumption patterns) are biased away from the national broadcasters'.⁶⁸ Again, Collins notes a tendency, specifically in the sphere of musical culture, towards 'the rupturing of national cultural communities along a fault-line of age'.⁶⁹

It is, of course, not only a matter of age. In the survey quoted above, Mills summarises the overall position in Britain: 'Acceptance of foreign-language material is predictably highest among the better educated, those in the higher social groups and those living nearer the capital'.⁷⁰ Rather than concern ourselves with the 'Europeanisation' or 'transnationalisation' of culture in the abstract, we need to ask more concrete questions. For which particular groups, in which types of places is this prospect becoming a reality? And what can this tell us about the future?

Martin Walker worries about the emergence of a standardised 'Euro-business' class clutching their inevitable filofaxes and sporting the standard 'business Euro-uniform worn from Glasgow down to Naples'.⁷¹ These, presumably, are precisely the people for whom 'Europe' is becoming a tangible reality. They are also the people to whom Collins

refers in his comments on the current development of the European newspaper market – those on the upper side of the fault-line of social class, across Europe – who, given their competence in English, are particularly likely to ‘become differentiated from their co-linguists and integrated into a new cosmopolitan culture where the growth of “horizontal” links to similar strata elsewhere will supplant the longer established “vertical” links with [their own] national language community’.⁷²

This, of course, gets us back to the question of the terms in which European culture is, even if only for some particular groups within our societies, being transnationalised. And those terms are, of course, literally, English – or Anglophone. Our analysis of the cultural impact of any form of domination must always be differentiated, concerned to establish which groups, in which places, are receptive (or not) to it. Similarly, we now want to argue, we must pay close attention to the *relative* popularity or exportability of different parts of the cultural repertoire, of the (in this case, Anglophone) cultural products in question. It is the Anglophone (and principally American) audiovisual media that are cutting horizontally across the world audience, engaging the attention and mobilising the enthusiasm of popular audiences, and often binding them into cultural unities that are transnational. They are ‘restratifying national communities and separating élite from mass or popular taste, and thus threatening the cultural hegemony enjoyed by the national cultural élites’.⁷³

However, not all Anglophone cultural products are equally exportable. We must ask a more specific question about which types and varieties of Anglophone product are exportable to whom, under what conditions. Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus offer the concept of ‘cultural discount’ to account for the fundamental process through which ‘a particular programme, rooted in the culture, and thus attractive in that environment, will have a diminished appeal elsewhere, as viewers find it difficult to identify with the style, values, beliefs, institutions and behavioural patterns of the material in question’.⁷⁴ The point, however, is that cultural discount can be argued to apply differentially to various types or information products as they are exported. In an attempt to offer a more differentiated analysis Collins argues that:

*Cultural discount is likely to be lower for audiovisual products than for written works, and within the audiovisual category, lower for works with little linguistic content than for works in which speech is an important element.*⁷⁵

For this reason, the argument runs, programming with a high speech content, because it is so much subject to misunderstanding, is unpopular with ‘foreign’ viewers. Conversely, a channel such as MTV builds its international appeal precisely on the fact that there is little problem with language, in so far as, according to MTV’s European Chief Executive Officer, ‘for the bulk of our music programming, the words are practically irrelevant’.⁷⁶ The point is supported by Mills, who argues that

⁷² Richard Collins, ‘The Peculiarities of English Satellite Television in Western Europe’, op cit, p 11.

⁷³ Richard Collins, ‘National Culture: A Contradiction in Terms?’, op cit, p 10.

⁷⁴ Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus, op cit, p 500.

⁷⁵ Richard Collins, ‘The Peculiarities of English Satellite Television in Western Europe’, op cit, p 8.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Richard Collins, ‘National Culture: A Contradiction in Terms?’, op cit, p 30.

⁷⁷ Pam Mills, *op cit*, p 501.

⁷⁸ See Geoff Mulgan, 'A Thousand Beams of Light', *Marxism Today*, April 1989.

⁷⁹ See Richard Collins, 'The Peculiarities of English Satellite Television in Western Europe', *op cit*; John Clemens, *op cit*.

⁸⁰ See Pam Mills, *op cit*; John Clemens, *op cit*; Alessandro Silj *et al*, *East of Dallas: The European Challenge to American Television*, London, British Film Institute, 1988.

⁸¹ David Waterman, 'World Television Trade: The Economic Effects of Privatisation and New Technology', *Telecommunications Policy*, vol 12, no 2, June 1988.

⁸² Michael Tracey, 'Popular Culture and the Economics of Global Television', *Intermedia*, vol 16, no 2, March 1988, pp 22, 24.

⁸³ See Philippe Breton and Serge Proulx, *L'Explosion de la Communication*, Paris/Montreal, La Decouverte/Boreal, 1989.

'programming that is not dependent on understanding the language – for example, an opera or ballet channel or a pop channel – will attract widely dispersed and sometimes potentially large audiences, but informational programming . . . will meet language barriers'.⁷⁷

Attempts to attract a European audience with English-language programming, not unlike the attempt to create European advertising markets, do seem to have largely foundered in the face of the linguistic and cultural divisions in play between the different sectors of the audience. Witness the difficulties experienced by Super Channel in its attempt to develop pan-European programming. We seem now to be experiencing a form of revisionism among the advertisers and the major satellite channels, in their retrenchment to strategies more closely adapted to the linguistic divisions across the continent.⁷⁸

While everyone seems to agree (by and large) about the difficulties, different commentators offer contradictory scenarios for the future. Thus Collins suggests that cultural discount will be higher for entertainment than for informational programming, while Clemens argues that, conversely, a more likely scenario is one in which we see a combination of privately owned pan-European channels specialising in entertainment programming with multi-lingual soundtracks, alongside national state channels specialising in news and current affairs programming.⁷⁹

However, despite these uncertainties as to the most likely course of future development, some things are clear. There is a growing realisation that the success of American-style commercial programming in Europe is context-dependent in a very specific sense. US imports only do well when domestic television is not producing comparable entertainment programming – and whenever viewers have the alternative of comparable entertainment programming in their own language, the American programmes tend to come off second best.⁸⁰

There is some evidence to suggest that, in the larger European countries at least, the 'most popular domestic programmes consistently outperform the leading US ones'.⁸¹ Michael Tracey suggests that the international communications system is more complex than is usually allowed for, and that there has been a gross underestimation of 'the strengths of national cultures, the power of language and tradition, the force that flows, still, within national boundaries'. Audiences are also more discriminating than is generally acknowledged: 'US television was never as popular, or even widespread as was assumed . . . national populations basically prefer national programming'.⁸² Recent research has pointed to the quite varied ways in which audiences from different cultural backgrounds use, perceive and interpret programmes in the light of the cultural resources and 'filters' at their disposal.⁸³

So, to return again to the issue of which question we should be asking about these developments, we can perhaps now reformulate it as a question about the potential cultural impact of some types of American (or pan-European) programming on some specific audience categories, in

some particular types of context (as defined by national programming policies). And even then, within that more highly specified context; we need to be quite cautious in attributing effects (on audiences) to programmes. That is not simply because programmes do not have simple or straightforward effects on their viewers which can be easily predicted from an analysis of their content (or their production history). It is also because, precisely in order to be exportable, programmes such as *Dallas* have to operate at a very high level of abstraction, and the price of this approach to a universality of appeal is a higher level of polysemy or multi-accentuality. The research of Ang and of Katz and Liebes⁸⁴ reminds us just how open these types of programmes are to re-interpretation by audiences outside their country of origin. Which brings us, finally, to the question of the audience.

⁸⁴ Ien Ang, op cit; Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes, 'On the Critical Ability of Television Viewers', in E Seiter *et al* (eds), *Remote Control*, London, Routledge, 1989.

Domestic viewing as national ritual: family, television, nation

We have spent some time engaging with the debates about cultural identity, new technologies and the transnationalisation of culture in the terms in which they are customarily posed – that is, from the point of view of production economics, the changing technologies of distribution and their potential cultural effects on the media audience. We now want to reverse the terms of the argument, and look at the question from the point of view of the domestic users and audiences of these new technologies, as they function in the context of household and family cultures. The question to be asked is how the new patterns of supply of programming will be filtered and mediated by the processes of domestic consumption. The key issues, we suggest, concern the role of these technologies in disrupting established boundaries (at the national and domestic levels, simultaneously) and in rearticulating the private and public spheres in new ways. Our argument is that analysis of the processes of creation of new image spaces and cultural identities needs to be grounded in the analysis of the everyday practices and domestic rituals through which contemporary electronic communities are constituted and reconstituted (at both micro and macro levels) on a daily basis.

In rehearsing these issues we shall primarily be drawing on a body of work which has developed in recent years around the role of broadcast media in the construction of national communities. Clearly, given our earlier arguments about the inadequacy of the concept of the nation in relation to many current economic, political and cultural developments, we are aware that it is not only (or even primarily) national communities that are at stake here. Rather, our interest in these arguments lies in the model they may offer for understanding the role of communications technologies in the construction of a whole series of 'electronic communities' – at local, regional, national and international levels. In each of these cases, though, we would argue that we must pay close attention

⁸⁵ Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life*, London, Pluto, 1976, p 42.

⁸⁶ J S Fontaine, 'Public or Private? The Constitution of the Family in Anthropological Perspective', *International Journal of Moral and Social Studies*, vol 3, no 3, 1988, pp 280-284.

⁸⁷ Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, London, Hutchinson, 1979.

⁸⁸ Paddy Scannell, 'Radio Times', in P Drummond and R Paterson (eds), *Television and its Audience*, London, British Film Institute, 1988.

to the articulation of public and private worlds, and particularly the relation of the domestic group, which is broadcasting's primary audience, to the wider communities of which it is a constituent part.

Historically, Eli Zaretsky notes that 'the early bourgeoisie understood the family to be the basic unit of the social order – "a little church, a little state" and the lowest rung in the ladder of social authority. They conceived of society as composed not of individuals but of families'.⁸⁵ In a similar vein, Fontaine observes that in contemporary industrial societies 'households are also units in the political and economic organisation of society; as such they are part of the public domain. A legal address is an expected attribute of a citizen'. Thus, while the household enjoys privacy, which implies the right to exclude (unless the police have a warrant) and to enjoy autonomy of action, that 'privacy is as much a matter of social definition as the effect of thick walls'.⁸⁶ Moreover, as Donzelot argues, the family does not have a unique or unambiguous status. For certain (eg juridical) purposes, it is private; while for others it is public. It is the site of intervention for various state welfare agencies, whose intervention to regulate child-rearing (or television-viewing) practices within the family, for example, is legitimated by reference to the state's legitimate concern with the 'proper' upbringing of future members of the national labour force.⁸⁷ For Donzelot, the family is not simply a private institution but also the point of intersection of a whole range of medical, judicial, educational and psychiatric practices – it is by no means a wholly private realm, somehow outside (or indeed, setting the limits of) the social. In this sense the family is neither totally separate from, nor opposed to, the state; rather the 'private' itself is a (legally, juridically) constructed space, into which the state and other agencies intervene. Among these agencies are, of course, communications and information organisations.

Recently, Paddy Scannell has usefully analysed the unobtrusive ways in which broadcasting sustains the lives and routines from one day to the next, year in, year out, of whole populations.⁸⁸ This is, in effect, to pay attention to the role of the media in the very structuring of time and in the socialisation of the private sphere. Scannell's focus is on the role of national broadcasting media as central agents of national culture, in the mobilisation of popular involvement in the calendar of national life. He analyses the way in which broadcast media constitute a cultural resource shared by millions, and the way in which, for instance, long running popular serials provide a past in common to whole populations.

Modern mass democratic politics has its forum in the radically new kind of public sphere that broadcasting constitutes. In their historical analysis of the development of British broadcasting, Cardiff and Scannell focus on its crucial role in forging a link between the dispersed and disparate listeners and the symbolic heartland of national life, and on its role in promoting a sense of communal identity within its audience, at both regional and national levels. Historically, the BBC, for example,

can be seen to have been centrally concerned to 'supply its isolated listeners with a sense of the community they had lost, translated from a local to a national and even global level'.⁸⁹ Here we see precisely the concern to articulate the private and public spheres: to connect the family and the nation. As Cardiff and Scannell note, the audience has always been seen as composed of family units – as 'a vast cluster of families, rather than in terms of social classes or different taste publics'.⁹⁰ Lord Reith himself was most concerned with the possibilities that broadcasting offered of 'making the nation one man' [sic]. At its crudest level of operation, Cardiff and Scannell report from an Empire Day radio programme in 1935 in which a mother is heard explaining to her daughter: 'The British Empire, Mary, is made up of one big family.' Mary asks, 'You mean a family like ours, Mummy?' and mother replies, 'Yes, darling. But very much larger'. The pervasive symbol of unification was, from the beginning, the family, 'connoting Mother Britain and her children in the Empire, as well as the Royal Family and each little family of listeners'.⁹¹

This is no merely quaint or historical point. In a close parallel, Brunsdon and Morley argue that the central image of much contemporary current affairs and 'magazine' programming is precisely the family – and the nation as composed of families.⁹² In this type of broadcasting, the nuclear family is the unspoken premise of much programme discourse: not only is the programming addressed to a 'family audience' but this domestic focus accounts both for the content ('human interest stories') and the mode of presentation (the emphasis on the everyday aspects of public issues: 'so what will this new law mean for ordinary consumers?'). What is assumed to unite the audience, the 'nation of families', is their experience of domestic life. In this sense, broadcasting does much more than simply to make available experiences (the Cup Final, the Proms) which were previously only available to those who could be physically present. Beyond this, the 'magic carpet' of broadcasting technologies has played a fundamental role in promoting national unity at a symbolic level, linking individuals and their families to the centres of national life, offering the audience an image of itself and of the nation as a knowable community, a wider public world beyond the routines of a narrow existence, to which these technologies give symbolic access.

In a similar vein, in his analysis of the development of radio light entertainment, Simon Frith observes that radio did more than simply to make public events accessible, by bringing them into the home. More importantly, 'what was on offer was access to a community . . . what was (and is) enjoyable is the sense that you too can become significant by turning on a switch'.⁹³ And thus, while domestic listening or viewing might be 'a very peculiar form of public participation' it offers the sense of participation in a (domesticated) national community; the spectator can feel part of an imaginary totality.⁹⁴

From a Latin-American perspective, Martin-Barbero identifies the

⁸⁹ David Cardiff and Paddy Scannell, 'Broadcasting and National Unity', in J Curran *et al* (eds), *Impacts and Influences*, London, Methuen, 1987, p 162.

⁹⁰ *ibid*, p 161.

⁹¹ *ibid*, p 162.

⁹² Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley, *Everyday Television: Nationwide*, London, British Film Institute, 1978.

⁹³ Simon Frith, 'The Pleasures of the Hearth', in J Donald *et al* (eds) *Formations of Pleasure*, London, Routledge, 1983, pp 120-121.

⁹⁴ Claus-Deiter Rath, 'Live/Life: Television as a Generator of Events in Everyday Life', in P Drummond and R Paterson (eds) *Television and its Audience*, London, British Film Institute, 1988, p 37.

⁹⁵ Jesus Martin-Barbero, 'Communication from Culture: The Crisis of the National and the Emergence of the Popular', ... *Media, Culture and Society*, vol 10, 1988, p 455.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, pp 461, 456.

⁹⁷ John Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, London, Routledge, 1982, p 5.

⁹⁸ Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley, *op cit*.

⁹⁹ John Hartley, *op cit*, p 124.

¹⁰⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso, 1983, p 31.

¹⁰¹ John Hartley, *op cit*, p 124.

key role of the communications media as 'converting the masses into a people and the people into a nation'. He notes that, in many Latin-American countries, it was above all the development of national broadcasting systems which 'provided the people of different regions and provinces with a first daily experience of the nation'.⁹⁵ As he argues, the construction and emergence of national identities cannot properly be understood without reference to the role of communications technologies. These technologies allowed people 'a space of identification'; not just an evocation of a common memory, but rather 'the experience of encounter and of solidarity'. Thus, the nation is to be understood not simply as an abstraction, but as a lived experience made possible by broadcasting technologies, whose achievement was the 'transmutation of the political idea of the nation into lived experience, into sentiment and into the quotidian'.⁹⁶

In these analyses, we can perhaps begin to identify the terms which would be necessary in order to connect the micro and macro levels of analysis and to articulate our analysis of television as an essentially domestic medium with the analysis of larger-scale cultural processes, such as those of the construction of national publics and cultural identities.

How might we conceive of this articulation between the domestic and the national? Some years ago, John Ellis referred, somewhat gnominically, to television as 'the private life of the nation state'.⁹⁷ His comment can be seen as a parallel to the argument in Brunsdon and Morley about the way in which British television is often concerned to construct an image of the national 'we', an 'us' whose constituent elements are 'ordinary families'.⁹⁸ This frequently provides the very basis of the broadcasters' claims to represent their audience – and of their implicit appeals for various forms of audience identification with the programme presenters. In the same way, Hartley has argued that 'television is one of the prime sites upon which a given nation is constructed for its members',⁹⁹ drawing, like many others, on Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an 'imagined community', the construct of particular discourses. As Anderson puts it: 'An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity'.¹⁰⁰

Wherein lies this simultaneity? Among other sources we can perhaps look to the regulation of simultaneous experience through broadcast schedules. Where does this confidence come from? Among other sources, Anderson points to the newspaper as a mechanism for providing imaginary links between the members of a national community. As Hartley puts it, newspapers are 'at one and the same time the ultimate fiction, since they construct the imagined community, and the basis of a mass ritual or ceremony that millions engage in every day'.¹⁰¹

Herman Bausinger develops the point about the newspaper as a linking mechanism between the rituals of the domestic, the organisation of

the schedules of everyday life and the construction of the 'imagined community' of the nation. Bausinger comments on the nature of the disruption caused when a morning edition of a newspaper fails to appear. His point concerns that which is missed. As he puts it: 'Is it a question . . . of the missing content of the paper? Or isn't it rather that one misses the newspaper itself? Because the newspaper is part of it (a constitutive part of the ritual of breakfast for many people), reading it proves that the breakfast time world is still in order'.¹⁰² And, of course, vice versa.

A similar point, and indeed, a stronger one, given the necessary simultaneity of broadcast television viewing, could be made in relation to the watching of evening news broadcast for many viewers – where the fact of watching, and engaging in a joint ritual with millions of others, can be argued to be at least as important as any informational content gained from the broadcast. For our purposes, the point we would stress here is the potential usefulness of the model offered in Bausinger's analysis for focusing our analysis on the role of communications media in articulating our private and public worlds.

The further point, inevitably, involves the significance of these arguments in the context of current and prospective changes in the structure of broadcasting. The proliferation of broadcast channels through cable and satellite television is likely to move us towards a more fragmented social world than that of traditional national broadcast television. These new forms of communication may in fact play a significant part in deconstructing national cultures, and the interactive and 'rescheduling' potentialities of video and other new communications technologies may disrupt our assumptions of any 'necessary simultaneity' of social experience.

There is a substantial body of evidence that broadcast television constitutes a significant cultural resource on which large numbers of people depend, to a greater or lesser extent, for supplying their needs, both for information and for entertainment. There is further evidence that broadcast television plays a significant role (both at a calendrical and at a quotidian level) in organising and scheduling our participation in public life, in the realms of politics and leisure activities. The arrival of satellite television is bringing about significant changes both in the extent and the nature of the supply of programming (directly, through its own programme strategies, and indirectly, through the responses which existing broadcast institutions are making in order to compete with their new rivals). Given these premises, the need is clear for the cultural impact of these changes in programme supply to be closely monitored during this key period of broadcasting history, in which, in Europe and North America, established patterns of consumption may be expected to fragment in a number of directions. The key issue concerns the role of the new technologies in offering a changed (and varying) menu of cultural resources, from and by means of which we will all be constructing our senses of self-identity. In analysing those processes, we must attend closely to how cultural identities are produced, both at the macro and

¹⁰² Herman Bausinger, 'Media, Technology and Everyday Life', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol 6, no 4, 1984, p 344.

micro levels, and ask what role these various media play in the construction of our sense of ourselves – as individuals and as members of communities at various levels – whether families, regions, nations, or supra-national communities. But, above all, we must not address these issues as a set of political abstractions, for they are, finally, matters of our (mediated) everyday lives.

To return to the global questions with which we began, concerning new communications technologies, changing cultural identities and the various modes of cultural imperialism, it may be that we have much to learn from those for whom the question of cultural imperialism has long been unavoidable. Confronted now by fears of domination by American and multinational corporations in the new communications industries, there is an understandable tendency to fall back into a 'Fortress Europe' posture, designed to fend off 'America', and a concern to defend indigenous national cultures against the threat of 'Brussels'. However, as Martin-Barbero puts it, this is to define our indigenous culture as a 'natural fact', a kind of pre-reality, static and without development, the 'motionless point' of departure from which modernity is measured. From this perspective,

*transformed into the touchstone of identity, the indigenous would seem to be the only thing which remains for us of the "authentic", that secret place in which the purity of our cultural roots remains and is preserved. All the rest is contamination and loss of identity.*¹⁰³

The rejection of such calls for 'authenticity' or 'purity' in defence of national culture is the precondition of our effective engagement with the current processes of cultural reconfiguration in Europe.

Thanks to Andrew Gillespie for comments on an earlier draft.

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THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL CINEMA

BY ANDREW HIGSON

¹ This article is based on a chapter from a PhD thesis which I am currently preparing. I would like to acknowledge the work of Thomas Elsaesser in enabling me to develop some of the arguments advanced here.

² Susan Barrowclough, 'Introduction: the dilemmas of a national cinema', in Barrowclough, ed., *Jean-Pierre Lefebvre: The Quebec Connection*, BFI Dossier no 13, 1981, p 3.

ALTHOUGH THE TERM 'national cinema' is often used to describe simply the films produced within a particular nation state, this is neither the only way in which the term has been used, nor is it, I want to argue, the most appropriate way of using the term. This article is not, however, intended as an examination of any historically concrete national cinema. It is intended instead as an exploration of some of the implications of using the term 'national' in discourse about cinema (the film industry, film culture), moving towards an argument that the parameters of a national cinema should be drawn at the site of consumption as much as at the site of production of films; an argument, in other words, that focuses on the activity of national audiences and the conditions under which they make sense of and use the films they watch. In so far as reference is made to historically specific national cinemas, most of my examples will relate to British cinema (and, of course, Hollywood), but I would hope that much of what I have to say is generalisable to other national cinemas – at least those of Western Europe – as well.¹

The concept of national cinema has been appropriated in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons: there is not a single universally accepted discourse of national cinema. In general terms, one can summarise these various mobilisations of the concept as follows. First, there is the possibility of defining national cinema in economic terms, establishing a conceptual correspondence between the terms 'national cinema' and 'the domestic film industry', and therefore being concerned with such questions as: where are these films made, and by whom? Who owns and controls the industrial infrastructures, the production companies, the distributors and the exhibition circuits? Second, there is the possibility of a text-based approach to national cinema. Here the key questions become: what are these films about? Do they share a common style or world view? What sort of projections of the national character do they offer? To what extent are they engaged in 'exploring, questioning and constructing a notion of nationhood in the films themselves and in the consciousness of the viewer'?²

Third, there is the possibility of an exhibition-led, or consumption-based, approach to national cinema. Here the major concern has always been to do with the question of which films audiences are watching, and particularly the number of foreign, and usually American films which have high-profile distribution within a particular nation state – a concern which is generally formulated in terms of an anxiety about cultural imperialism. Fourth, there is what may be called a criticism-led approach to national cinema, which tends to reduce national cinema to the terms of a quality art cinema, a culturally worthy cinema steeped in the high-cultural and/or modernist heritage of a particular nation state, rather than one which appeals to the desires and fantasies of the popular audiences.

In other words, very often the concept of national cinema is used prescriptively rather than descriptively, citing what *ought* to be the national cinema, rather than describing the actual cinematic experience of popular audiences. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has noted, it has always been something of a struggle to enable 'the recognition of popular forms as a legitimate part of national cultural life'.³

If these are some of the ways in which the term national cinema has been used, what are the processes by which, or what are the conditions under which, a particular mode of film practice, or a specific range of textual practices, or a particular set of industrial practices comes to be named a national cinema? Indeed, what is involved in calling forth the idea of a national anything, cultural or otherwise. In other words, what is involved in positing the idea of nationhood or national identity?

To identify a national cinema is first of all to specify a coherence and a unity; it is to proclaim a unique identity and a stable set of meanings. The process of identification is thus invariably a hegemonising, mythologising process, involving both the production and assignation of a particular set of meanings, and the attempt to contain, or prevent the potential proliferation of other meanings. At the same time, the concept of a national cinema has almost invariably been mobilised as a strategy of cultural (and economic) resistance; a means of asserting national autonomy in the face of (usually) Hollywood's international domination.

The process of nationalist myth-making is not simply an insidious (or celebratory) work of ideological production, but is also at the same time a means of setting one body of images and values against another, which will very often threaten to overwhelm the first. The search for a unique and stable identity, the assertion of national specificity does then have some meaning, some usefulness. It is not just an ideological sleight of hand, although it must always also be recognised as that. Histories of national cinema can only therefore really be understood as histories of crisis and conflict, of resistance and negotiation. But also, in another way, they are histories of a business seeking a secure footing in the market-place, enabling the maximisation of an industry's profits while at the same time bolstering a nation's cultural standing. At this level, the politics of national cinema can be reduced to a marketing strategy, an

³ 'Popular culture', *New Formations*, no 2, Summer 1987, p 80.

⁴ 'Chronicle of a death retold: hyper, retro or counter-cinema', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol 54, no 641, June 1987, p 167.

⁵ *New German Cinema: A History*, London, BFI/Macmillan, 1989, pp 6-7.

⁶ 'Narrating the nation', *Times Literary Supplement*, June 13, 1986, p 659; see also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.

attempt to market the diverse as, in fact, offering a coherent and singular experience. As Thomas Elsaesser has suggested, 'internationally, national cinemas used to have a generic function: a French, Italian or a Swedish film sets different horizons of expectation for the general audience – a prerequisite for marketing purposes',⁴ and it is this attempt to establish a generic narrative image, a particular horizon of expectation, which is at stake.

There are perhaps two central methods, conceptually, of establishing or identifying the imaginary coherence, the specificity, of a national cinema. First, there is the method of comparing and contrasting one cinema to another, thereby establishing varying degrees of otherness. Second, there is what might be termed a more inward-looking process, exploring the cinema of a nation in relation to other already existing economies and cultures of that nation state.

The first of these means of defining a national cinema is premised upon the semiotic principle of the production of meaning and identity through difference. The task is to try to establish the identity of one national cinema by its relationship to and differentiation from other national cinemas: British cinema is what it is by virtue of what it is not – American cinema, or French cinema, or German cinema, etc . . . Elsaesser again: 'Other countries try to maintain themselves on a terrain staked out by the competition. West Germany is one example, but the implications affect all developed countries whose sense of cultural identity is based on a need to maintain markers – and markets – of difference vis-à-vis the products of the international entertainment business.'⁵ To some extent, then, the process of defining a national cinema, and thereby establishing some sort of unique and self-contained identity, takes meaning in the context of a conceptual play of differences and identities. And, as Benedict Anderson has argued, 'nations . . . cannot be imagined except in the midst of an irremediable plurality of other nations'.⁶

Within this discourse cinema itself is almost taken for granted, and the task becomes one of differentiating between a variety of apparently nationally constituted modes of cinematic practice and filmically produced signs and meanings. Such an operation becomes increasingly problematic as cinema develops in an economy characterised by the international ownership and circulation of images and sounds. It is therefore necessary to examine the overdetermination of Hollywood in the international arena. By Hollywood, I mean the international institutionalisation of certain standards and values of cinema, in terms of both audience expectations, professional ideologies and practices and the establishment of infrastructures of production, distribution, exhibition, and marketing, to accommodate, regulate and reproduce these standards and values. While Hollywood's classical period and its studio system may have disappeared, whatever the prophecies about the end of cinema in the late 1970s and early 1980s, cinema – and Hollywood – are, in the late 1980s, still very much alive and key components in the international mass entertainment business. This is the era of the multiplex, the pack-

age deal, the blockbuster, but also the revival of genre cinema and the serial film, even if the site and system of delivery are no longer primarily theatrical.

Hollywood never functions as simply one term within a system of equally weighted differences. Hollywood is not only the most internationally powerful cinema – it has also, of course, for many years been an integral and naturalised part of the national culture, or the popular imagination, of most countries in which cinema is an established entertainment form. In other words, Hollywood has become one of those cultural traditions which feed into the so-called national cinemas of, for instance, the western European nations. ‘Hollywood can hardly be conceived . . . as totally other, since so much of any nation’s film culture is implicitly “Hollywood”’.⁷ Being both a naturalised part of national culture, and also, visibly different, even exotic,⁸ Hollywood thus functions as a doubled mode of popular fantasy, hence its propensity to be dismissed as escapism.

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has attempted to account for the appeal of American films in the British market as follows – and his account would seem at least to be partially applicable to other national cinemas as well:

The hidden history of cinema in British culture, and in popular culture in particular, has been the history of American films popular with the British public. The strength of American cinema was never just economic . . . [and] the basic reason for Hollywood’s dominance was artistic and cultural. The American cinema set out in the first place to be popular in America where it served an extremely diverse and largely immigrant public. What made it popular at home also helped make it popular abroad. The ideology of American cinema has tended to be far more democratic than that of the cinema of other countries. This in part reflects the actual openness of American society, but it is above all a rhetorical strategy to convince the audiences of the virtues and pleasures of being American. Translated into the export arena, this meant a projection of America as intensely – if distantly – appealing. When matched against American films of the same period, their British counterparts come across all too often as restrictive and stifling, subservient to middle class artistic models and to middle and upper-class values.⁹

At times, Nowell-Smith’s claims seem overstated.¹⁰ To suggest, for instance, that ‘British cinema . . . has never been truly popular in Britain’¹¹ is to ignore the box-office success over the years of numerous British stars, films, genres and cycles of films. And to argue in terms of a generalised, monolithic ‘British public’ is to ignore class, race, gender and regional differences. Even so, Nowell-Smith’s revaluation of American films in terms of the appeal of apparently democratic aspirations seems useful. For a start, it displaces the idea that American box-office success in foreign markets is due solely to manipulative marketing and aggressive economic control. Furthermore, it challenges the conventional attacks, both conservative and radical, on American culture by noting the way in which its integration into the British cultural form-

⁷ Elseasser, ‘Chronicle of a death retold’, p 166.

⁸ See Nowell-Smith, *New Formations*, op cit, p 81.

⁹ ‘But do we need it?’, in Martin Autey and Nick Roddick, eds, *British Cinema Now*, London, BFI, 1985, p 152. For other writers advancing a similar argument, see also Paul Swann, *The Hollywood Feature Film in Post-War Britain*, London, Croom Helm, 1987; Paul Willemsen, ‘In search of an alternative perspective: an interview with Armand and Michelle Mattelart’, *Framework*, nos 26-27, 1985, p 56; Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ‘Gramsci and the national-popular’, *Screen Education*, no 22, Spring 1977; Don MacPherson, ‘The Labour Movement and oppositional Cinema: introduction’, in *Traditions of Independence*, London, BFI, 1980, pp 127-128; Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith, *Cinema, Literature and Society: elite and mass culture in inter-war Britain*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, pp 170-178; Robert Murphy, ‘A rival to Hollywood? The British film industry in the thirties’, *Screen*, vol 24, nos 4-5, July-October 1983.

¹⁰ See Tony Aldgate, ‘Comedy, class and containment: the British domestic cinema of the 1930s’, in James Curran and Vincent Porter, eds, *British Cinema History*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983. See

also my 'Saturday night or Sunday morning? British cinema in the fifties', in *Ideas and Production*, issue IX-X, 1989, pp 146-149.

¹¹ Nowell-Smith, 'But do we need it?', p 152.

¹² 'Popular culture and hegemony in post-war Britain', in *Politics, Ideology and Popular Culture*, Unit 18 of Open University Popular Culture course (U203), p 13.

¹³ See eg David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, London, RKP, 1985; Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, London, Starword, 1983; Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, London, BFI, 1986; Charles Barr, ed, *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*, London, BFI, 1986; Roy Armes, *A Critical History of British Cinema*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1978.

ation broadens the cultural repertoire available to audiences. As Tony Bennett has suggested, the argument that America is involved in a form of cultural imperialism 'although not without point . . . misses much of the essential ambivalence of the impact of American popular culture in Britain which, in many respects, has been more positive, particularly in making available a repertoire of cultural styles and resources . . . which, in various ways, have undercut and been consciously mobilised against the cultural hegemony of Britain's traditional élites'.¹²

The rhetoric of democracy and populism is built into the formal organisation of the American film, with its classically strong and dynamic narrative drive towards individual achievement – although this also points to the limitations of the rhetoric, since problems and their resolutions are invariably articulated only in relation to the *individual* within a substantially unchanged capitalist patriarchy. Further, classical Hollywood cinema conventionally ties this narrative structure of achievement to the romantic appeal of the formation of the heterosexual couple, and situates the narrative both within a visual form whose *mise-en-scène* and organisation of spectacle and spectating has proved intensely pleasurable, and within a physical context of film-watching which emphasises the process of fantasising. Overall, this form has a propensity to engage the spectator thoroughly in a complex series of identifications, with an almost ruthless disregard of the nationality (as well as class and gender) of the spectator, and it is often the figure of the star which holds together these various formal strategies, narrative, visual and identificatory.

This is not to suggest that many British films, for instance, do not also work within the same formal system. But it is generally accepted that American film-makers innovated, applied, and exploited this form of film-making much earlier and more consistently than their British counterparts who operated with a much more mixed, and so-called 'primitive', variety of modes of representation, compared to Hollywood where this mode of representation had become institutionalised by 1917. It is also generally accepted that Hollywood has had the resources, which British film producers have lacked, to exploit the potential appeals of the institutional mode of representation.¹³ Thus, for instance, British cinema has never been able to sustain a star system on the same glamorous scale as Hollywood for long periods of time – not least since Hollywood tends to consume British stars for its own films, thereby increasing the stake which British audiences have in those films.

If we confine discussion to film production, it makes sense in this context to speak of national cinemas as non-standard and marginal activities. Part of the problem, of course, is the paradox that for a cinema to be nationally popular it must also be international in scope. That is to say, it must achieve the international (Hollywood) standard. For, by and large, it is the films of the major American distributors which achieve national box-office success, so that film-makers who aspire to this same level of box-office popularity must attempt to reproduce the standard,

which in practice means colluding with Hollywood's systems of funding, production control, distribution and marketing. Any alternative means of achieving national *popular* success must, if it is to be economically viable, be conceived on an international scale, which is virtually impossible for a national film industry, unless it has a particularly large domestic market, as in the case of the Bombay film industry. The difficulty is to establish some sort of balance between the 'apparently incompatible objectives of a national cinema – to be economically viable but culturally motivated', 'to be "national" in what is essentially an international industry'.¹⁴

Historically, at least within the Western European countries, there has been one major solution to this problem, one central strategy for attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable and maintain both some form of national cultural specificity and achieve a relative degree of international visibility and economic viability: the production of an art cinema, a nationally-based (and in various ways state-subsidised) cinema of quality. As Steve Neale has argued, art cinema has played a central role 'in the attempts made by a number of European countries both to counter American domination of their indigenous markets in film and also to foster a film industry and a film culture of their own'.¹⁵ The discourses of 'art', 'culture' and 'quality', and of 'national identity' and 'nationhood', have historically been mobilised against Hollywood's mass entertainment film, and used to justify various nationally specific economic systems of support and protection. But there are two further points to note here. First, that this is yet another instance of 'the peculiarity of a national film production within an international marketplace',¹⁶ since the market for art cinema is indeed decidedly international, as is the network of film festivals and reviewing practices, and other means of achieving a critical reputation and both a national and an international cultural space for such films.¹⁷ And second, that perhaps the situation isn't quite so peculiar after all, given the increasing tendency for international co-productions (invariably with the involvement of one or other of the still-extant national television networks), and the development of transnational forms of industry support and protection within the European Community.

However, the various international art cinemas have rarely achieved a national popular success, partly because of their modes of address, and partly because of the international hegemony of Hollywood at the level of distribution, exhibition and marketing. Indeed, in the case of the British film industry at least, the distribution and exhibition arms of that industry have primarily been organised to foster, extend and consolidate the domination of the British market by American popular films. Thus for some time the major American studios have had their own distribution companies operating in Britain, while the major British companies have built up close relationships with American producers and distributors, who often also have substantial financial interests in British companies. British companies have found this sort of co-operation

¹⁴ Elseasser, *New German Cinema*, p 3 and p 39.

¹⁵ 'Art cinema as institution', *Screen*, vol 22, no 1, 1981, p 11.

¹⁶ Elseasser, *New German Cinema*, p 49.

¹⁷ See Neale, *op cit*, pp 34-35.

¹⁸ See chapters on the film industry in Curran and Porter, eds, *op cit*, and Barr, ed, *op cit*; and Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, *Cinema and State*, London, BFI, 1985.

necessary, since, in capitalist terms, the American film industry was much better organised before the British film industry, and was able to pursue imperialist policies with some vigour, undercutting the charges of local distributors, since they could go into the British market in the knowledge that costs had already been recovered from the huge American domestic market.¹⁸

In other words, the influence of Hollywood on domestic markets is always much more than simply a question of the poverty or élitism of domestic film-making. This suggests that national cinema needs to be explored not only in relation to production, but also in relation to the questions of distribution and exhibition, audiences and consumption, within each nation-state. The idea that Hollywood – and now, of course, television – has become a part of the popular imagination of British cinema audiences needs to be taken seriously.

As such, it becomes insufficient to define national cinema solely by contrasting one national cinema to another, and we need also to take into account the other key way of defining a national cinema – what I have suggested is a more *inward-looking* means, constituting a national cinema not so much in terms of its difference from other cinemas, but in terms of its relationship to an already existing national political, economic and cultural identity (in so far as a single coherent identity can be established) and set of traditions. In this way, British cinema would be defined in terms of already established discourses of Britishness, by turning in on itself, on its own history and cultural formation, and the defining ideologies of national identity and nationhood, rather than by reference to other national cinemas – bearing in mind always that Hollywood may itself be an integral part of that cultural formation.

At one level, in terms of political economy, a national cinema is a particular industrial structure; a particular pattern of ownership and control of plant, real estate, human resources and capital, and a system of state legislation which circumscribes the nationality of that ownership – primarily in relation to production. The relative economic power of a national film industry will depend upon the degree to which production, distribution and exhibition are integrated, regulated, technically equipped and capitalised; the size of the home market and the degree of penetration of overseas markets. At the level of production, we need to take into account both the means and modes of production employed (the organisation of work, in terms of systems of management, division of labour, professional organisations and ideologies, availability of technology, etc) and the access that producers have to both domestic and overseas markets. It is important to recognise also that even the domestic market is not homogeneous, and that production companies often deliberately limit themselves to specific areas of exploitation, especially when faced with the mainstream box-office supremacy of the major American distributors overseas. These limited areas of exploitation will, in many cases, be areas considered marginal (that is, marginally profitable) by Hollywood (low-budget films, B movies, films made primarily

for the domestic market rather than for export, art cinema, and so on).

It is worth underlining again the role of the state, and the terms of its intervention in the practices of a film industry, in determining the parameters and possibilities of a national cinema (as both an economically viable and a culturally motivated institution) – at least since the mid 1910s, when governments began to recognise the potential ideological power of cinema, and cinema itself could seem to be something like a national cultural form, an institution with a nationalising function. But it is also important to recognise that the state intervenes only when there is a felt fear of the potential power of a foreign cinema, and particularly when the products – and therefore the ideologies and values – of a foreign cinema are widely circulated within a nation state, and assumed to be having also a detrimental effect on that nation state's economy. In other words, while it is conceptually useful to isolate a single national cinema, it is necessary also that it is seen in relation to other cinemas.

The same of course is true when we come to examine the cultural identity of a particular national cinema. The areas that need to be examined here are, first, the content or subject matter of a particular body of films – that which is represented (and particularly the construction of 'the national character'), the dominant narrative discourses and dramatic themes, and the narrative traditions and other source material on which they draw (and particularly the degree to which they draw on what has been constructed as the national heritage, literary, theatrical or otherwise) – in other words, the ways in which cinema inserts itself alongside other cultural practices, and the ways in which it draws on the existing cultural histories and cultural traditions of the producing nation, reformulating them in cinematic terms, appropriating them to build up its own generic conventions. Second, there is the question of the sensibility, or structure of feeling, or world-view expressed in those films. And third, there is the area of the style of those films, their formal systems of representation (the forms of narration and motivation which they employ, their construction of space and staging of action, the ways in which they structure narrative and time, the modes of performance which they employ and the types of visual pleasure, spectacle and display with which they engage), and their modes of address and constructions of subjectivity (and particularly the degree to which they engage in the construction of fantasy and the regulation of audience knowledge).

In considering cinema in terms of cultural identity, it is necessary also to pay attention to the processes by which cultural hegemony is achieved within each nation-state; to examine the internal relations of diversification and unification, and the power to institute one particular aspect of a pluralistic cultural formation as politically dominant and to standardise or naturalise it. *Historical accounts of national cinemas* have too often been premised on unproblematised notions of nationhood and its production. The search for a stable and coherent national identity can only be successful at the expense of repressing internal differences, tensions and contradictions – differences of class, race, gender, region,

¹⁹ See eg Eugene Kamenka, 'Political nationalism: the evolution of the idea', in Kamenka, ed, *Nationalism*, London, Edward Arnold, 1976, pp 3-20; and Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, London, Verso, 1981, pp 329-341.

²⁰ *Op cit*, p 659.

²¹ 'Questions of property: film and nationhood', *Cine-tracts* vol 1, no 4, Spring/Summer 1978, p 10.

²² *Op cit*, p 659.

²³ See Paul Willemsen, 'Remarks on Screen: introductory notes for a history of contexts', *Southern Review*, vol 16 no 2, July 1983, p 296.

etc. It is important also to pay attention to historical shifts in the construction of nationhood and national identity: nationhood is always an image constructed under particular conditions, and indeed nationalism itself, as a concept in the modern sense, can only be traced back to the late 18th century.¹⁹ 'History', as Benedict Anderson puts it, 'is the necessary basis of the national narrative.'²⁰

As Stephen Heath has suggested, 'nationhood is not a given, it is always something to be gained'²¹ – and cinema needs to be understood as one of the means by which it is 'gained'. Thus, definitions of British cinema, for instance, almost always involve, on the one hand, the construction of an imaginary homogeneity of identity and culture, an already achieved national identity, apparently shared by all British subjects; and on the other hand, the valorisation of a very particular conception of 'British cinema', which involves ignoring whole areas of British cinema history. In each case, a process of inclusion and exclusion is enacted, a process whereby one thing is centralised, at the same time necessarily marginalising another, a process wherein the interests of one particular social group are represented as in the collective or national interest, producing what Anderson has called 'the imagined community of the nation'.²²

Proclamations of national cinema are thus in part one form of 'internal cultural colonialism': it is, of course, the function of institutions – and in this case national cinemas – to pull together diverse and contradictory discourses, to articulate a contradictory unity, to play a part in the hegemonic process of achieving consensus, and containing difference and contradiction.²³ It is this state of contradictoriness which must always be borne in mind in any discussion of national cinema. Cinema never simply reflects or expresses an already fully formed and homogeneous national culture and identity, as if it were the undeniable property of all national subjects; certainly, it privileges only a limited range of subject positions which thereby become naturalised or reproduced as the only legitimate positions of the national subject. But it needs also to be seen as actively working to construct subjectivity as well as simply expressing a pre-given identity.

National cinema is, then, a complex issue, and I would argue that it is inadequate to reduce the study of national cinemas only to consideration of the films produced by and within a particular nation state. It is important to take into account the film culture as a whole, and the overall institution of cinema, and to address the following issues:

□ the range of films in circulation within a nation state – including American and other foreign films – and how they are taken up at the level of exhibition; in the present era, of course, films are 'in circulation' and 'exhibited' or on display in a variety of ways, and not just to be physically projected at cinemas (multiplexes, city-centre cinemas, art-house cinemas, etc): they are available on video and via the various forms of broadcast and cable television as *films*, but they are also present

and re-cycled in popular culture *intertextually*, as icons, reference points, standards and pastiches;

□ the range of sociologically specific audiences for different types of film, and how these audiences *use* these films in particular exhibition circumstances; that is to say, we need to take into account not only the historically constituted reading practices and modes of spectatorship and subjectivity, the mental machinery and relative cultural power or readerly competences of different audiences – but also the experience of cinema(s) in a more general cultural sense: the role of marketing and audience expectation, the reasons why particular audiences go to the cinema, the pleasures they derive from this activity, the specific nature of the shared social and communal experience of cinema-going, differentiated according to class, race, gender, age, etc, the role of television (and video) in mediating and transforming the experience of cinema, the different experiences offered by the various types of theatrical exhibition spaces. It is worth remembering that, from the point of view of economic historians such as Douglas Gomery, film industries marked by a high degree of horizontal and vertical integration can be seen as no more nor less than highly diversified cinema circuits, where production is a necessary high-risk service industry, and where cinemas are as much luxurious sites for the consumption of or advertising for commodities other than films, as they are sites for the fantasy experience of watching films;²⁴

□ the range of and relation between discourses about film circulating within that cultural and social formation, and their relative accessibility to different audiences. Crucial among these discourses is the tension between, on the one hand, those intellectual discourses which insist that a proper national cinema must be one which aspires to the status of art (and therefore adheres to the current dominant definitions of cinema as an art form), discourses which, from a particular class perspective, dismiss Hollywood's popular cinema as culturally debilitating; and on the other hand, those more populist discourses where, in effect, the idea of 'good entertainment' overrides questions of 'art' or 'nationality'. This latter discourse suggests that a cinema can only be national, and command a national-popular audience if it is a mass-production genre cinema, capable of constructing, reproducing, and re-cycling popular myths on a broad scale, with an elaborate, well capitalised and well resourced system of market exploitation. Again, the role of television must be taken into account as one of agents which generates, sustains and regulates film cultures and renders discourses about the cinema more or less accessible.

To explore national cinema in these terms means laying much greater stress on the point of consumption, and on the *use* of films (sounds, images, narratives, fantasies), than on the point of production. It involves a shift in emphasis away from the analysis of film texts as vehicles for the articulation of nationalist sentiment and the interpellation of the implied national spectator, to an analysis of how actual

²⁴ See Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System*, London, BFI/Macmillan, 1986.

audiences construct their cultural identity in relation to the various products of the national and international film and television industries, and the conditions under which this is achieved.

The current state of film studies is characterised by a tension between those who are working on the political economies of cinema and those who analyse and investigate textuality and the putative spectator, and by the corresponding absence of much work on actual audiences, beyond the examination of critical discourses. Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson have proposed the most acceptable form of relationship or mediation between political economy and textuality in terms of a sort of sociology of organisations and professional ideologies.²⁵ Clearly, this is something that could be fruitfully explored in relation to other national cinemas. But it doesn't at present help to bridge the gap between textual analysis, the analysis of critical discourses in print-form, and the vast continent of the popular audiences for film – and the question of audiences has to be crucial for the study of national cinemas. For what is a national cinema if it doesn't have a national audience?

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THE DIALECTICAL WANDERINGS OF EXILE

BY ZUZANA M PICK

I

¹ See Zuzana M Pick: 'Chilean Cinema in Exile. 1973-1986. The notion of exile: a field of investigation and its conceptual framework.' London, *Framework*, No 34, 1987, pp 40-57.

Three Crowns of a Sailor (Raúl Ruiz, 1982) and *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* (Fernando Ezequiel Solanas, 1986) were produced in France and directed respectively by a Chilean and an Argentine. In general terms, both films relay the preplexing forms that national identity takes in situations of exile. The extreme fabulation of the first, and the dispersal of representational codes of the latter, evidence a relentless obsession with national idioms. For instance, the surface of *Three Crowns of a Sailor* is populated by European romantic sailor stories, while mariner legends of the southern Chilean coast inhabit its inner core. In *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*, the misty melodies of the tango recite the past wanderings and contemporary turmoil of the communal Argentine soul.

To the extent that these films are engaged with memory, they are also marked by a staunch refusal to be engulfed by nostalgia. If displacement is a signifier of loss, it is also affected by a reconstructive process of belonging. As I have already written elsewhere, the subjectivity of exile is constantly re-inventing itself in a labouring process of decantation. The iconic images of the original formation are transformed; their value changed in contact with elements from the new formation. By mixing the old and the new, representation is re-articulated and re-constituted through new aesthetic and rhetorical alliances.¹ *Three Crowns of a Sailor* and *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* are both incursions into cross-cultural landscapes where elements of diverse formations are re-cast. An exile, as Bertold Brecht stated, is the ultimate dialectician. But I want to add that an exile is also a consummate traveller whose cultural territory is shaped through a layering process and whose representational world is made up of intersecting figures.

Therefore, my interest in *Three Crowns of a Sailor* and *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* does not stop at the significance of their aesthetic and political strategies. In order to understand the effects of displacement, I want to look at the manner in which exile fosters a multi-layered aware-

ness of the elements that constitute inter-national identities. Perhaps, and as Caren Kaplan suggests, 'in modernist writing exile is a frequent metaphor for existential alienation. [But] a poetics of displacement can be read in certain modernist texts, signalling a postmodern moment; that is, a more processual, multicultural notion of identity . . .'² I also want to argue that these films are anchored in the poetics of a Latin American imaginary as the field that has generated some of the most politically innovative cultural practices. The last three decades of Latin American cultural production have been marked by projects that have sought to dislodge the fixed ideological assumptions about national identity. Roberto González Echeverría states that 'the concept of culture has served as an ideology that gives meaning to Latin American literature, whereas modern Latin American literature emerges as it labors to unsettle that relationship, even in the texts that most openly appear to promote it. . . . In the functioning of literature as an institution the concept of culture is a key element. Remove the concept of culture and its corollary of national identity from the language of Latin American literature and that literature becomes nearly silent.'³

The eccentricity of these expeditions into identity have sought to displace the subjective and collective sense of belonging from its nationalist foundations to its continental ground. By re-defining the parameters of identity, cultural practices have been understood as a site of struggle. As the territory of cultural intervention is constantly being reinvented, practices are no longer attached to restrictive geographical boundaries. What I see at stake here is a profile of new patterns of identity forged through the convergence of representational, cultural and national systems. Perhaps and because *Three Crowns of a Sailor* and *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* belie unilingual readings, I want to chart a critical map that could accommodate issues ranging across a multiplicity of fields.

I am aware that some questions will be left unanswered, particularly those pertaining to the relationship that the films of Raúl Ruiz and Fernando Ezequiel Solanas hold to recent French production. Edgardo Cozarinsky, an Argentine also working in Paris, has insinuated that the language of films made by Latin Americans retains – despite its French fluency – a recognisable foreign inflection. In a study on the French cinema of foreign directors, he has written that the films of Latin Americans 'illuminate France, and consequently its cinema, with a lateral light that emphasises volume and texture in an elaborate and dramatic way rather than the harsh frontal-lighting that flattens everything out.'⁴ Hence, one could assume that the migratory contours of the cinemas of Raúl Ruiz and Fernando Ezequiel Solanas and the Parisian succès d'estime of *Three Crowns of a Sailor* and *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* are indicative of a dialogical integration rather than of an assimilation into existing structures.

A linear comparison between Ruiz's prolific career and Ezequiel Solanas' sporadic activity is hardly appropriate, considering the different conditions both filmmakers had to face in France and the political

² Caren Kaplan: 'The Poetics of Displacement in Alicia Dujovne Ortiz's *Buenos Aires*' in *Discourse* No 8, Winter 1986-1987, p 84.

³ *The Voice of the Masters*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985, p 9.

⁴ 'Les réalisateurs étrangers en France: Hier et aujourd'hui.' *Positif* (Paris) No 325, March 1988. p 42. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

expectations inflecting the reception of their films. On the one hand, Raúl Ruiz profited in the mid-1970s from sources of funding that had practically dried out by the time Fernando Ezequiel Solanas began financing his own project in 1982. Ruiz himself has often insisted that his working habits never made him a likely candidate for the *avance sur recettes* system used by most filmmakers in France while, from the outset, Solanas sought out the support of mainstream funding institutions like the Centre National de la Cinématographie. On the other hand, the political solidarity in France towards Allende supporters from Chile was far more intense than towards Peronist militants due to a deep mistrust by the European Left towards the complexities of the Argentine situation. The political chaos that had preceded the 1978 *coup d'état* did not encourage wide-ranging support for the initial wave of exiles. Only the progressive disclosure in the late 1970s of the viciousness of the Argentine military – including the systematic disappearances of women and children – would eventually contribute to the establishment of solidarity networks in France. By 1978, when Fernando Ezequiel Solanas began what would become a lengthy process to produce *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*, Raúl Ruiz's films were no longer inflected by the political urgency of his earlier years in exile. The Argentine film was very much bound to the efforts of exiles to promote solidarity with the recent history of their country while the work of Raúl Ruiz had progressively moved away from direct references to Chile.

In as much as Raúl Ruiz and Fernando Ezequiel Solanas arrived in Paris following significant directorial careers in their countries of origin, their earlier films were connected to a previously acquired status. But the critical expectations regarding their work would ultimately shift as soon as the political and aesthetic thrust of their films presumably no longer conformed to recognisable models. In the early 1970s, the commanding paradigm of Latin American cinema was intrinsically bound to a revolutionary aesthetic and to a limited body of films associated to the movement known as the New Cinema of Latin America, that included *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Fernando Ezequiel Solanas and Octavio Getino, 1965-1968). From the late 1960s on, the New Cinema of Latin America set the tone for a range of critical assumptions. It is arguable that the political urgency, the social relevance and the cultural activism represented by the films of this New Cinema influenced the reception of any films directed by Latin Americans, even those who worked outside their countries of origin. A brief commentary on the work of Raúl Ruiz and Fernando Ezequiel Solanas will help understanding how these cinematic practices that began in Chile and Argentina reconstituted themselves both inside and outside the paradigm that preceded them. This task is particularly crucial because it addresses the complex encounter between political practice and cultural production.

Practically unknown before 1974 by critics and audiences outside Chile, Raúl Ruiz was scarcely burdened by ready-made opinions about his work. In fact, most European critical approaches to his work have tended to look at his Chilean production in a minor way, posing his exile in Paris as a definite break with his national origins. (In my case any claims regarding a Chilean Ruiz are informed by an acquaintance with most films made before 1973. The haphazard nature of my recollections could be construed as a liability that I prefer to see as a modest asset when seeking to enter the dialectical wanderings of an exiled film maker.) Obviously, Ruiz also encouraged this critical outlook in 1978 when he began filming in French, with French crews and actors, and when his films dealt only in marginal ways with his country of origin. The most incisive recognition of this paradox has been made by Jonathan Rosenbaum who admits having only seen one of Ruiz's Chilean films. Relying on critical reports only, he distinguishes between Ruiz, the Chilean subject and the regional film maker before *Dialogue of Exiles*, and Ruiz as '... a particular point of convergence between different levels of culture, and a lack of fixed identity and allegiances ...'⁵

However, the Chilean films of Raúl Ruiz reached Europe as part of the cinema of the Popular Unity period that included the films of Aldo Francia (*Valparaíso, mi amor*, 1967), Miguel Littin (*The Jackal of Nahueltoro*, 1968 and *Promised Land*, 1972-1974), and Helvio Soto (*The Chronicles of Salpetre*, 1967 and *Vote + Gun*, 1971), and Patricio Guzmán (*The Battle of Chile. Part I: Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie*, 1973-1974). In as much as these Chilean films were rooted in the representation of the communal bonds of a national identity, they also fitted into the models of political filmmaking that characterised the New Cinema of Latin America. None the less, the work of Raúl Ruiz was marginal to what was termed as the *cinema of Allende*.⁶ On one hand, the ironic treatment of middle-class stereotypes in *The Three Sad Tigers* (1967) and *Nobody Said Anything* (1972) went against the grain of social realism in that it transgressed the documentary tendencies that impregnated the cinema of his generation. Raúl Ruiz loves to recall that he registered as a student at the School of Social Documentary of the University of Santa Fé in Argentina, but he soon left because he felt uncomfortable with the aesthetic positions favoured by its director Fernando Birri. (Diego Bonancina, the cinematographer of Birri's most famous film *Tire Die* (1956) would later move to Chile and work on most of Ruiz's films, including *The Three Sad Tigers*.) On the other hand, these films drew attention to national identity as a perversely codified and ritualised performance and lacked the epic dimensions that characterised the socialist cinema of the Allende period. Similar claims can be made for *La Colonia Penal* (1971) and the unfinished *Socialist Realism* (1972) which have sporadically been included in retrospectives of Ruiz's work.

Upon his arrival in Europe, Ruiz went first to Berlin to complete the

⁵ Jonathan Rosenbaum. 'Beating the Labyrinth' *Monthly Film Bulletin*, London, Vol 52 No 612, January 1985. Cf also Zuzana M Pick 'Raoul Ruiz: de l'exil, du dépaysement et de l'exotisme.' *Positif* No 274, December 1983, pp 33-35.

⁶ See Michael Chanan, ed. *Chilean Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1976, and Zuzana M Pick, 'Le cinéma chilien sous le signe de l'Unité Populaire.' *Positif*, Paris, No 155. January 1974.

⁷ Considering the pitiful state of the single existing copy last projected in Paris in 1983, and since no negative appears to have been preserved, the film will unlikely resurface in other than written form. See my review 'Un débat nécessaire. *Diálogo de exilados*.' *Positif* No 174, October 1975, pp 61-62.

⁸ Jacqueline Mouesca, Carlos Orellana. 'El Caso Ruiz.' *Araucaria*, Paris, No 23, 1983, pp 106-112.

⁹ See *Cahiers du Cinéma* No 345, March 1983, dedicated entirely to Ruiz's work. It might be useful to point out in 1974 most of Ruiz's Chilean films were shown in Pesaro. Other comprehensive retrospectives have been organised by the FilMOTECA Nacional de España (1978), the National Film Theatre in London (1981), the Rotterdam festival (1982), and the Toronto Festival of Festivals (1985).

¹⁰ For details of this collaboration see Serge Toubiana. 'Le jeu de produire. Entretien avec Paolo Branco,' in *Cahiers du Cinéma* No 379, January 1986, pp 15-19.

editing of *The Expropriation* (1973), a feature which he began in Chile during the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. After that he went to Paris and directed *Dialogue of Exiles* (1974) in collaboration with a group of Latin Americans already established there that included Percy Mattas, a Chilean producer. In the highly-charged political atmosphere that followed the 1973 military coup, *Dialogue of Exiles* was judged – by most political groupings that served as a rallying point for the Chilean community in Europe – as an unwarranted presentation of the drama of exile. The film's humorous, flippant and surreal treatment of the adventures and tribulations of a group of exiles, compounded with a sketch-like narrative, diverged from the predictable authenticity of social realism. Attacked by organisations in exile for embarrassing the Chilean resistance – under the pretext of opportunism and bad political judgement – the only existing copy of *Dialogue of Exiles* was removed from distribution.⁷ Even after the critical success of *Three Crowns of a Sailor* in 1983, Raúl Ruiz was still being chastised for his 'lack of generosity' and *Dialogue of Exiles* judged for its 'lack of depth', and ultimately for discarding exile as banal scraps of anecdotes.⁸ Following a period of relative inactivity, Ruiz secured more or less consistent funding support from the Institut National de la Communication Audiovisuelle (INA) and managed to draw critical attention to his work from one of France's foremost film magazines. A retrospective of his films, organised in 1983 by *Cahiers du Cinéma* in Paris, demonstrated the frenzied activity that began in 1978 with *The Suspended Vocation* all the way to *Three Crowns of a Sailor* in 1983. The *Cahiers* critics valued Ruiz's outstanding ability to journey between two cultures, his innovative modernism and his prolific creative output.⁹

Presumably critics recognised that the singularity of Ruiz's films, exemplified by a unique approach to cinematic representation, was also related to distinct methods of work that Ruiz had skilfully transplanted from his country of origin. In spite of difficult conditions in Chile, Ruiz always managed to work with modest means – drawing support from existing institutions but also from his family and friends – and produced a highly personal cinema. His films were favourably received by a handful of critics, who appreciated his originality, creative habits and prolific output, but he never reached a wide audience. Similar claims can be made for his work in France which has largely been produced under the auspices of the INA and has mainly been broadcast on television. Although Ruiz was forced to opt for a certain degree of professionalism, like sketching a written scenario, he scarcely reneged on the make-do style that characterised his earlier work although, even though it differs wilfully from the imperatives of public funding institutions. The collaborative relationship with producer Paolo Branco's company Les Films Du Passage allowed Raúl Ruiz to arrange contacts for shooting most of his feature length films in Portugal.¹⁰ In 1984, Ruiz was appointed director of the audiovisual section of the Maison de la Culture, first in Grenoble and then in Le Havre. This move away from Paris increased

his access to a more diversified – yet marginal – funding base that was particularly suitable to his modest working requirements. *Three Crowns of a Sailor* was produced by the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, in partnership with TF-1. This film is exceptional to the extent that it was the only film directed by Ruiz to receive extensive theatrical distribution.

As his films became more *French*, Latin American film critics began responding ambivalently to Ruiz's work, commenting sporadically on his prolific output. But it would really be up to exiled critics – with access to Ruiz and his films – to disseminate information about his career.¹¹ The uneven distribution of the films encouraged the spread of highly differing views that entrenched Ruiz's marginality with regard to the contemporary Latin American cinema. As a matter of fact, Ruiz is the only major Chilean filmmaker whose films have not been shown at the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema which began in Havana in 1979. Now that his films are finally reaching Chile, Ruiz is no longer the enigmatic exile with a formidable filmography. Any former suspicion about his Parisian *succès d'estime* appears to have subsided and his accomplishments slowly recognised.

The circumstances that distanced Ruiz from most of his compatriots endeared him to European and North American critics. Even a quick review of the articles and interviews published in French, Spanish and English-language publications, reveals a suggestive fascination both with Ruiz the Chilean exile, and with Ruiz the prolific innovator. Nobody, including myself, has written on his work without acknowledging a certain fascination with his engaging personality, his celebrated hospitality and his baroque humour. Nobody, with the exception of a handful of detractors, has refrained from seeking authorial imprints in the presence of what is certainly an unqualifiable cinematic practice. Hence, the cinema of Ruiz has been a constant irritant for critics who have sought the politics of Third World representation and have encountered instead the formal qualities of avant-garde cinema, or the uncategorisable properties that constitute Ruiz's work as a 'new European ghetto of its own'.¹² It is precisely the *otherness* of this practice that has drawn attention to Ruiz's cinema but also estranged him from the predominant modes of Latin American cinematic discourse.

III

In 1982, Raúl Ruiz had entered one of the most prolific periods of his career and directed two of his most relevant films about exile: *The Whale's Roof* – a baroque equivalent of *Dialogue of Exiles* – and *Three Crowns of a Sailor*. Following what appeared to be a disastrous incursion into a commercial mode of filmmaking with a bizarre tale of cannibalism co-produced by Roger Corman (*The Territory*, 1981), Ruiz packed up his usual cohort of friends, including Henri Alekan as a cinematogra-

¹¹ Ronald Melzer 'El realismo de la vocación y los suspensos del chileno Raúl Ruiz.' *Cinemateca Revista*, Montevideo, No 33, August 1982, and Agustín Mahieu. 'Los cuadros vivientes o hipótesis de Raúl Ruiz.' *Cine Libre*, Buenos Aires No 1, October 1982. After the Parisian retrospective, Chilean publications have regularly commented on Ruiz's films especially since he has travelled to Santiago on a number of occasions since 1984.

¹² Jonathan Rosenbaum in *Ten to Watch. Ten Filmmakers of the Future*, Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1985, p 32.

¹³ Jonathan Rosenbaum, 1985, op cit p 34.

¹⁴ 'Raúl/Sheherazade, or 1001 Films,' *Sight and Sound* Vol 53 No 3, Summer 1984 p 162.

¹⁵ David Ehrenstein 'Raul Ruiz' in *Film: The Front Line* 1984, Denver, Colorado: Arden Press Inc 1984, p 95.

¹⁶ 'A Secret Cinema: Raúl Ruiz' in *INA - French for Innovation. The Work of the Institut National de la Communication Audiovisuelle in Cinema and Television*. Edited by Jill Forbes, London: British Film Institute 1984, p 32.

pher, to the Netherlands to shoot *The Whale's Roof*. Alekan's transparent matings and gentle lighting produced a 'fiction about the Third World . . . a satire about the imagination in which Holland stands in for Patagonia and six languages are spoken (one of them invented!) to compound the sense of conflicting cultural systems.'¹³

As has been pointed out by most critics who have written on Raúl Ruiz, his collaboration with veteran cinematographers Sacha Vierny (*Hypothesis of a Stolen Painting*, 1979 and *Three Crowns of a Sailor*, 1982) and Henri Alekan (*The Territory*, 1981 and *The Whale's Roof*, 1982) created a conglomeration of aestheticised images that belies the modesty of the films' budgets. As Gilbert Adair has remarked, 'Ruiz pays his technicians by offering them an opportunity to participate directly in a number of complicated visual exploits.'¹⁴ The astonishing variety of shots exhibits a cinematic virtuosity that somehow appears at odds with Ruiz's penchant for brief shooting schedules. His propensity for complex set ups is compounded by the wordiness of the soundtrack and the ironic theatricality of performance. Nowhere is this more evident than in *Three Crowns of a Sailor*, with most location shooting done in Portugal, where luscious landscapes alternate with obsessively monstrous close-ups.

The admiration for the *aesthetics of excess* that inhabits Ruiz's French work presumes a postmodernist stance familiar to European and North American critics. If Ruiz's world emerges out of a labyrinth, it is one inhabited by a multitude of cultural mediations. What I would like to argue is that the playful fabulation of *Three Crowns of a Sailor* is more than just 'a kind of surrealist shaggy-dog story', or 'a pastiche of nearly every seafaring adventure saga'.¹⁵ It is also a *mise-en-spectacle* of exile that nourishes itself in the criss-crossing trajectories of various cultural practices, in spite of the parodical stance that undermines any possible Utopian overtones, or by 'a play between rhetorics' as Ian Christie has pointed out.¹⁶ However, I would like to counter Ian Christie's argument by suggesting that the rhetorical system of Ruiz's cinema, far from being impersonal, originates in a desire to expand the boundaries of inter-cultural address and identification.

By the time *The Three Crowns of a Sailor* was made, the cinema of Raúl Ruiz had already distanced itself from any single model of filmmaking. Certainly Ruiz had disconnected himself from the cinema of his compatriots, like Helvio Soto and Miguel Littin, but he had equally disengaged himself from French innovational practice through his distinctively prolific television work like *The Dog's Dialogue* (1977), *The Divisions of Nature* (1978) or *Short Primer of French History* (1979). Perhaps Ruiz's double-marginality, his status as an exile from his native country and from his adopted one, accounts for the *foundational* effect of this cinema where every film is a renewed attempt to re-draw formal and rhetorical boundaries. In this process, representational maps are informed by a negotiating process that recognises its origins and identifies new formations, allowing old and new codifications to intersect and subverting dominant discourse.

The systems of representation that inhabit Ruiz's work presume an interrogation of the national as nationalism; in other words of a historically-mediated centring of language that furnishes a rallying point for public consensus. In these circumstances marginality may serve a double function: it may challenge hegemonic practices while at the same time it may serve to formulate the subjective and collective experiences of exile. No wonder Raúl Ruiz wholeheartedly embraced marginality; it has granted him a space where identity can drift in and out, floating among iconic signifiers of nationality. In *Three Sad Tigers*, characters move incessantly from place to place, as in an existential haze, and the plot is reduced to a series of narrative and verbal digressions. Nothing remains stable, other than a disorienting sense of belonging where the urban landscape, reduced to its minimum expressions, plays a necessary containment role. *Three Crowns of a Sailor* shares with this film a gloomy, almost nihilist feeling that equally reaches its climax in a gratuitous and violent murder. Characters are wanderers, social and cultural outcasts, who roam through taverns and seaports exchanging stories for money and for places of habitation, not unlike the group in *Dialogue of Exiles* who wander around Parisian cafés and crowded apartments. The claustrophobic *mise en scène* of these films constructs a world of oppressive labyrinths, a *nowhereness* of fleeting maze-like fictions. As David Kehr has pointed out, in *Three Crowns of a Sailor* 'patterns emerge within the stories (told by the sailor to the young theology student), and patterns emerge around them', and the film escapes into an infinity of fictions.¹⁷ It is precisely in these fictions that the old and the new are reconstituted into heteroglossia, 'whereby language becomes the space of confrontation of differently oriented social accents, as diverse "socio-linguistic consciousness" fight it out on the terrain of language.'¹⁸

Hence, the de-centring of language in Ruiz's work is anchored in marginality of its original imprints and competing narratives, or what has become a Ruizian conundrum *par excellence*. Gilbert Adair explains it as follows:

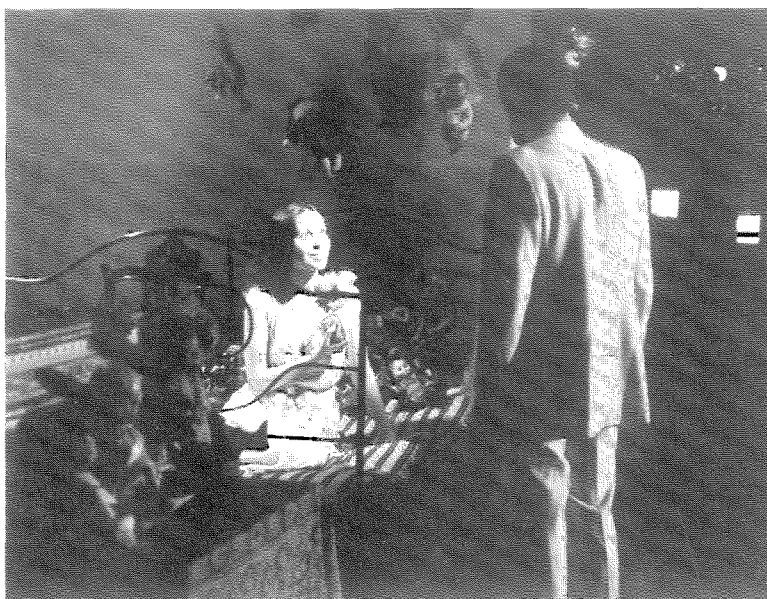
*In an interview with Cahiers du Cinéma, he described three characteristic Chilean attitudes. That of Lautaro, an Indian who was befriended by the Spaniards and who meticulously studied their methods for no other reason than to turn them against his masters. That of Jimmy Button, an illiterate Indian adopted by the captain of the "Beagle" on Darwin's first voyage: although he learned English in three weeks, went to Oxford and was even called to the Bar, he forgot everything on his return to South America. And that of Valderomat, the Chilean Oscar Wilde, who was the darling of the salons before drowning himself in a sewer. Asked which of them he identified with, Raul replied "I've the feeling I float from one to the other . . ."*¹⁹

The placement of Chilean and European culture in contention holds identification together and is perhaps a crucial element of Ruiz's narratives of culture. In as much as exile produces de-centred language, cultural identity returns to its formative stages where diversity struggles

¹⁷ 'And Now . . . Restructuralism' *Chicago Reader* April 6, 1984.

¹⁸ Robert Stam 'Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique' in E Ann Kaplan, ed, *Postmodernism and Its Discontents*, London, Verse: 1988, p 122.

¹⁹ 'The Rubicon and the Rubik Cube. Exile, Paradox and Raul Ruiz' *Sight and Sound* Vol 51 No 1, Winter 1981-82, p 42.

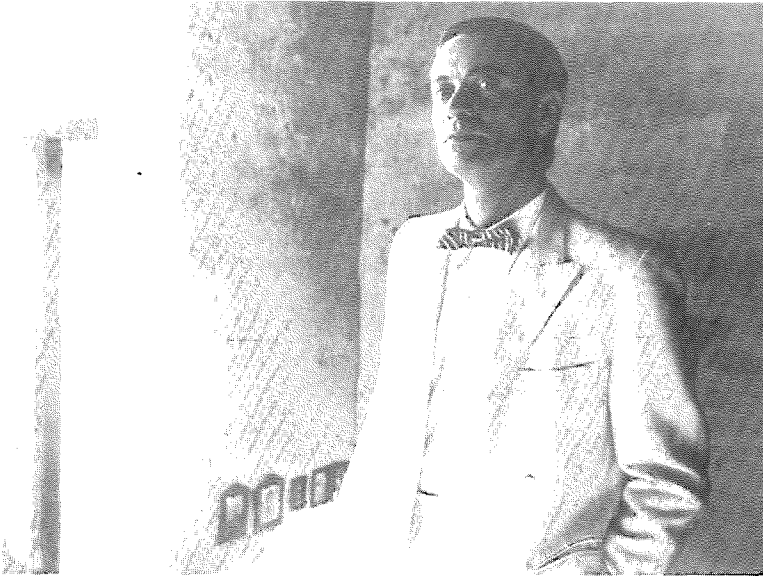


'Three Crowns of a Sailor' (Raúl Ruiz, 1982)

²⁰ Raúl Ruiz was born in Puerto Montt and his father worked as navigator steering ships in the straits along the southern Chilean coast.

against containment, where the imaginary negotiates its placement in the symbolic. *Destierro* is the Spanish-language word for banishment and it denotes de-territorialisation as much as geographical displacement. I would like to argue that the cinema of Raúl Ruiz, in spite of its bleak nihilistic penchant, has been a site of resistance against this loss of place. The traumatic destruction of the symbols that formed the backbone of national consciousness in Chile after the 1973 *coup d'état* are substituted in Ruiz's cinema in exile by re-inventing subjectivity through its founding principles.

The heterogeneous quality of *Three Crowns of a Sailor* springs precisely from a multiplicity of representational and literary sources in order to reterritorialise the origins of subjectivity. For instance, the 'Funchalense' that sails around the exotic ports of the world stands for the 'Caleuche', the mysterious ship that appears in southern Chile claiming the corpses of the fishermen who disappear in the sea. These vessels are mythical containers of competing intra-national fictions, and the site for a dialogical integration of European sailor stories and magic legends from Chiloé – meeting place of Romanticism and Chilean folklore.²⁰ The ship in *Three Crowns of a Sailor* is a narrative device, perhaps the fictional pretext, through which the film is told. However, and by an intricate interweaving of classical cinematic codes with unstable signifiers of inter-cultural imaging, Raúl Ruiz has invented a space where the uprooted subject can belong. The fictional landscape of the film is the Southern Hemisphere and its seaports which appear through the mariner's stories to re-constitute a surrogate family to



'Three Crowns of a Sailor'

replace the one left behind in Valparaíso. Tampico, Dakar, Singapore and Tangiers are the habitat of the imaginary. The film's aesthetic excess is anchored in the tropics, the exotic *other* of Western representation. The perverse erotic charge of *Three Crowns of a Sailor* resides in the fascinating insistence on the tropical settings of the Third World. The representational map functions by a disengagement from the European North to the American South, and from the desolate Chilean seaboard to the magic tropics. By tropics, I also mean the semiotic arrangement of signs into a discursive field in which the powerful contradictions of its erotic excess are enacted. By entering this field, the film frames the links between territory and culture. Although meta-fictional, subjectivity is re-shaped in *excess* and *desire*, in the encounter of representation and discourse.

The palimpsest-effect of *Three Crowns of a Sailor* places intertextuality at the crossroads of what I have called the *subjective paradox* of exile.²¹ In other words, this film constitutes itself as a maze of reflecting mirrors that conceal its cultural identity behind a hybrid practice. To the extent that this practice 'exemplifies' a way of inhabiting one's culture that is neither myopically nationalist or evasively cosmopolitan,²² it is characterised by an inquiry into cinematic discourse capable of expressing a distinct sense of being in the world, as if in *a room of one's own*. In my view the film is inflected by an eccentric and decentering integration of European elements, imprinting absence as a cultural marker. The exoticism of *Three Crowns of a Sailor*, enhanced by its reflexive surfaces, are regressive emblems of nostalgia. The 'Funchalense' is a ghost ship yet the stories told by the mariner to the theology student are

²¹ Zuzana M Pick, 1987, *op cit* p 56.

²² Paul Willemsen, 'The Third Cinema Question. Notes and reflections' *Framework* No 34, 1987, p 8.

²³ *op cit*, p 86.

²⁴ See the translation of this manifesto prepared by Julianne Burton and Michael Chanan in Chanan, ed, *Twenty-Five Years of Latin American Cinema*, London: BFI/Channel Four 1984.

²⁵ See Paulo-Antonio Paranagua, 'Fernando E Solanas: de la mémoire au mythe,' *L'Avant-Scène Cinéma*, Paris, No 377-378, January-February 1989, pp 5-16.

visionary gestures of a memory unable to forget. The dressed-up qualities of the film – the historically-dated techniques like its use of gels, depth of field, voice-over, and its generic traces – place loss in a variety of locations. As Caren Kaplan suggests, 'these devices keep absence at a distance to substitute loss with other separations in a seemingly endless chain of desire'.²³ To the extent that Ruiz's hybrid practice constructs a maze of mirrors, cultural identity suggests that discourse is summoned through processes of representation. Imaging is a site where cultural identity is reterritorialised and ceases to be solely geographical. The stylistic virtuosity of *Three Crowns of a Sailor* is certainly the awareness of this shift from regional to inter-national codifications, rather than a spirited demonstration of aesthetic skills.

IV

The cinematic production of Fernando Ezequiel Solanas has tended to be categorised within two distinct, if not opposing, forms of film making. His Latin American trajectory was deeply marked by his reputation as a political filmmaker. As producer/director of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1965-1968), with Octavio Getino, his name was linked to a Third World militant cinema. This four-hour documentary on Argentina, and the manifesto 'Towards a Third Cinema' – also co-written with Getino – evidenced his political engagement in spite of the disappointing setbacks encountered by Latin American revolutionary movements in the 1970s.²⁴ His career in Europe was characterised by long periods of inactivity that finally led to the making of *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* (1986) and later *Sur* (1988). As director and scriptwriter of these spectacular musical fantasies on the Argentine exile, Solanas' reputation shifted radically into a field associated with the European auteur cinema. The 18-year hiatus between *The Hour of the Furnaces* and *Tangos: The Exiles of Gardel* presents a puzzling dilemma: not only are the differences between these films quite striking but the assumptions regarding the New Cinema of Latin America have hardly kept up with historical changes.

As Paulo-Antonio Paranagua has pointed out, Fernando Ezequiel Solanas paid dearly for his status as a militant filmmaker.²⁵ He was forced to leave his country following the repressive atmosphere of the 1976 coup, unable to complete a feature film loosely inspired by Argentina's most popular, yet most controversial epic poem, first published in 1872 by José Hernández. His subsequent work in France, including *The Sons of Fierro* (1975-1978) which he managed to finish in Paris, vanished – or perhaps was banished – from critical attention. *The Sons of Fierro* was erratically distributed and Solanas took it upon himself to show his film. I attended a semi-private screening of this film in the winter of 1983, organised to remember an actor in the film who had recently died in Paris. Solanas made a documentary on the social integration of the

handicapped, and produced by Le Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers where he conducted film workshops: *The Look of Others* (1980) was primarily shown on television. Around this time, he put on hold a project on the life of Miguel Hernández, the Spanish poet who died in prison in 1942, and began working on a fictional project entitled *The Tango of Homer*. As he went through several re-writes, all disrupted by sporadic financial setbacks, the Argentine tango was re-conquering the stages of continental music halls.²⁶ Alongside composers such as Astor Piazzola and the Cuarteto Cedron who were living in Rome and Paris respectively, Argentine performers like Susana Rinaldi were touring Europe. While these musicians interpreted a contemporary tango whose musical idioms were less localised in traditional rhythms, the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar wrote lyrics and promoted, alongside Juan José Mosalini and Rodolfo Mederos, a new tango rooted in the experience of exile. In 1983, after the Malvinas fiasco and the collapse of the military regime, Solanas managed to secure financing both in France and Argentina for his project, then renamed *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*. TERCINE, the company that Solanas had set up in Paris to distribute *The Sons of Fierro*, and CINESUR in Argentina became co-producers. The film was shot in Paris and Buenos Aires with a mixed crew of French and Argentinian technicians and performers, including Chilean and Uruguayan exiles still living in Paris. Upon his return to Buenos Aires, Solanas directed *Sur* as a Franco-Argentine coproduction. Not precisely a sequel to *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*, this film delineates the meaning of *desexilio*, or what the Uruguayan poet and essayist Mario Benedetti has described as the dramatically painful but not less 'curious nostalgia of exile' facing those who have now gone back to their own countries.²⁷

Fernando Ezequiel Solanas' involuntary retreat from film making was due in part to the severe personal and material circumstances of his exile in Paris. The meagre critical attention given to *The Sons of Fierro* served to isolate him further. It might be useful to point out that even during the brief period of stability that followed the election of the Peronist party in Argentina, Solanas remained relatively detached from the local film community. The making of *The Sons of Fierro* coincided with the most disturbing phase of Isabel Perón's tenure in office and the shooting of the film took place under arduous conditions – almost clandestinely – as during the production of *The Hour of the Furnaces* ten years earlier. In spite of the monumental qualities of this film, and its central status within the radical aesthetics of the Argentine and the New Latin American cinemas, *The Hour of the Furnaces* was representative of only one mode of Argentinian filmmaking. As Ana López has pointed out, the Argentine cinema between 1955 and 1976 has been characterised by its 'outstanding heterogeneity' and '[this] period included practices as diverse as a struggling industrial commercial cinema, clandestine political filmmaking, the cosmopolitan *cinéma d'auteur* of the *nueva ola*, and the socially-conscious documentary work of Fernando Birri in the provinces.'²⁸ The names of film makers like Birri, Solanas and Raymundo

²⁶ For more details on this period see Paulo-Antonio Paranagua, 'Entretien avec Fernando E Solanas' *Positif*, Paris, No 297, November 1985, pp 21-30.

²⁷ Mario Benedetti, *El Desexilio y otras conjeturas*, Mexico: Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1986, p 41.

²⁸ Ana López, 'Argentina, 1955-1976: The Film Industry and Its Margins.' in John King and Nissa Torrents, eds, *The Gardens of Forking Paths: Argentine Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1989, p 49.

²⁹ Nissa Torrents, 'Contemporary Argentine Cinema' in John King and Nissa Torrents, eds., *The Gardens of Forking Paths: Argentine Cinema*, London: BFI 1989, p. 110.

³⁰ Paul Willemsen, 1987, op cit.

³¹ Gloria Bonder, 'Women's Organisations in Argentina's Transition to Democracy,' in Yolande Cohen, ed., *Women and Counter Power*, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989, p. 65.

³² 'Afterword', in John King and Nissa Torrents, eds, op cit, p. 129.

Gleyzer have come to embody – primarily outside Argentina – the revolutionary tendencies of Argentine cinema. In turn, this restrictive approach eventually proved to be an obstacle for contemporary evaluations and for a wide-ranging critical acceptance of *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*. What might be considered by some a betrayal of the militancy of the 1960s, is seen by others as a welcome evolution from the Utopia of Peronist populism.²⁹

I would argue that the ambivalent responses to the cinema of Fernando Ezequiel Solanas make sense in the framework of culturally and historically-mediated views on the Argentine context. On the one hand, it is arguable that the concepts mapped in 'Towards a Third Cinema' and the three-pronged classification of cinematic practices, have mostly been understood in terms of a homogeneity that is no longer readily apparent in the cinematic practices of the Third World.³⁰ On the other hand, even the defeat of the Peronist Party in 1976 has not tempered the deep-rooted mistrust for its bearing on the social and political fabric of the country. Since the mid-1940s, Peronism has haunted Argentina, rekindling the disturbing history of nationalist struggles and throwing the country periodically into social chaos. The dramatic consequences of the *dirty war* (1976-1983) and the recent efforts to regain a new sense of identity have constituted a fertile ground for a collective reconsideration of the ideological struggles that have traditionally shaped Argentina's history. It is from this perspective that the cinema of Fernando Ezequiel Solanas has been the subject of diverging, and sometimes opposing evaluations.

V

It is symptomatic that Solanas' long-drawn project for *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* should concretise itself precisely at the moment when civilian parties launched a concerted effort to disentangle the country from the devastating consequences of military rule. The possibility of working towards the constitution of a new social order, as Gloria Bonder pointed out, 'has led Argentines to regard democracy as the only political system for modern times, the symbol of social and political discourse, and the consensus that connects political institutions and civil society.'³¹ One of the primary elements of the Argentine process of re-democratisation has been the insistence on political pluralism, a resolve carried into all fields of social activity and cultural practice. For instance, the revived Institute of National Cinematography, according to its director Manuel Antin, took on the task to foster 'a cinema based on the wishes of the filmmakers'; and 'an Argentine cinema that is broad and all embracing.'³² While *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* appears to conform – albeit indirectly – to the overall intent of these policies, it remained an isolated instance. Cultural production in Argentina since 1983 assumed the challenge to reclaim the painful past and 'to articulate the lost voices of

the nation'. As Nissa Torrents points out, most of the twenty-two features made in 1985, particularly after the success of *The Official Story* (Luis Puenzo, 1984), dealt with Argentina's recent past.³³ *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*, however, turns away from contemporary history – as a 'master' narrative of re-democratisation – and privileges a more traditional symbol of Argentine culture. What might have appeared as a welcome change turned out to be also a major handicap, and Solanas' film was less successful in Argentina than in France. I think that it is necessary to address this shift because it is symptomatic of the way in which responses to national identity mediate cultural practices.

A close look at *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* that includes a brief review of *The Hour of the Furnaces* and *The Sons of Fierro* will perhaps elucidate its problematic relationship to Argentine nationality and identity. In my view these films project the idea that 'cultural identity', as Paul Willemen suggests, 'no longer precedes the discourse as something to be recovered, but it is by trying to put an understanding of the multifarious social-historical processes at work in a given situation into discourse, that the national-cultural-popular identity begins to find a voice.'³⁴ I would like to argue that the ambiguous position of Solanas' work is precisely the result of its simultaneous inscription into hegemonic and oppositional formations of national identity. It is in this context that I am struck by the manner in which filmic strategies are placed in relation to referential texts of Argentine nationality.

In spite of what we might perceive today as politically problematic – the avowed reiteration of Peronist ideology and the voluntarism of revolutionary slogans – both *The Hour of the Furnaces* and 'Towards a Third Cinema' bear the energetic marks of a radical need to question the traditional boundaries of Argentine identity and cultural practice. The innovative strategies of *The Hour of the Furnaces* are guided by an invitation to the viewers to be 'total participant[s] in the *mise en scène* of the "film act" and . . . to continue the work [or the conclusions derived from] this *mise en scène* outside the space of the projection hall.'³⁵ This patterning of spectatorship is linked to cultural inscriptions – musical arrangements, indexical references, and socially-mediated iconography – and to a critical framework anchored in conflicting concepts of nationality. *The Hour of the Furnaces* places identity in a necessary process of class struggle through the history of the Peronist movement. The film's capacity to venture beyond the limits of nationalist politics is crucial to its revolutionary agenda. As Robert Stam has pointed out, the 'experimental language is indissolubly wedded to its political project; the articulation of one with the other generates the film's meaning had secures its relevance.'³⁶ *The Hour of the Furnaces* situates itself in the framework of Third World struggles as formulated by Frantz Fanon, Ché Guevara and Ho Chi Minh. The project of decolonisation is placed inside an international dialectic informed by political and aesthetic debates, and formulated in diverse historical contexts but always seeking an investment in conflicting outlines of intra-national consciousness. The

³³ Nissa Torrents, op cit, p 110.

³⁴ Paul Willemen, op cit, p 27.

³⁵ Ana López, op cit, p 68.

³⁶ Robert Stam, 'The Hour of the Furnaces and the Two Avant-Gardes' in Coco Fusco, ed, *Reviewing Histories: Selections from New Latin American Cinema*, Buffalo, NY: Hallwalls, Contemporary Arts Center, 1987, p 90.

³⁷ Nissa Torrents, *op cit*, p 98.

³⁸ An excellent contextualisation of the poem has been written by Angeles Cardona de Gilbert in the 1974 edition of *Martin Fierro*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Bruguera.

³⁹ The *payada* is a traditional gaucho form of popular poetry consisting of improvised verses. In its pre-literary form, it was a competition between *payadores* who performed their mastery in front of large audiences, José Hernández gave the *payada* its literary form in *Martin Fierro*. The *milonga* is a popular ballad indigenous to the River Plate region.

hegemonic antinomy elaborated by Domingo F Sarmiento in his novel-essay *Facundo: Civilization or Barbarism*, written in 1854, is questioned through an exposé of neocolonialism and underdevelopment. It is interesting to note that *The Hour of the Furnaces* still holds a particular oppositional status in contemporary evaluations of Argentine cinema. Nissa Torrents, for instance, questions the validity of its conceptual and political framework in light of later political developments and with regard to its reliance on discursive paradigms that have, in her words, 'been particularly harmful to Argentina, dividing the country and preventing the formulation of long-term political, social and cultural strategies.'³⁷

The Sons of Fierro re-claims the formative stages of nationhood through a critical presentation of class struggle and populist politics. This film is inspired by *Martin Fierro*, the 'epic' poem written by José Hernández in 1872. The poem is one of the most contentious texts of Argentine literature and it constitutes a polemical axis of Argentine identity, together with *Facundo: Civilization or Barbarism*. This poem was written to celebrate the rebellious saga of the gaucho and his struggle against the destructive efforts by the government in Buenos Aires to colonise the pampas.³⁸ Although the film is based on Hernández's poem, it disengages itself from the literary sources in order to map the *processual* dialectics of national consciousness. *The Sons of Fierro* is characterised by the imaginative blending of representational forms that range from documentary realism to epic spectacle, and by the juxtaposition of historical periods. The film moves between well-known episodes of the poem and allusions to events that marked Argentina from the fall of Perón in 1955 to the election of the Peronist Party in 1973. This amalgamation of historical references is accompanied by the equation of the musical forms that deploy the patterns of the *payada* to the verses of the *Milonga*.³⁹ However, this re-appropriation of popular music into an epic and operatic structure constitutes only one aspect of the film's narrative design. *The Sons of Fierro* contextualises subjective and communal identity through various manifestations of popular culture that include historically-dated cinematic techniques and traditional generic codifications. The other aspect of the film is made up of historical references that form a fertile socio-political grounding for the reformulation of contemporary issues. At the level of aesthetic investment, *The Sons of Fierro* exhibits the possibility of re-negotiating the representational paradigms of nationhood. Whereas the poem places class as the founding principle of the Argentine project of national consolidation; Solanas' film positions the Peronist struggle at the heart of the contemporary revolutionary process. The film profiles 200 years of Argentine history and fosters historical readings that are not necessarily linked to direct chronological references. In view of the polemical positions inscribed in Solanas' filmic re-vision of the Argentine nationalist mythologies, it should not come as a surprise that *The Sons of Fierro* practically vanished from public view after it was completed in Europe.

In spite of its generic inscriptions, and its formal arrangement as a

musical, *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* equally relies on modalities of signification originating in national idioms and the political events that have constituted contemporary Argentine culture. For instance Solanas began the shoot by filming a documentary sequence on November 14, 1981 of a rally organised in Paris by AIDA – a human rights organisation based in Europe – to draw attention to the disappeared in Argentina.⁴⁰ In its orchestration of popular music, its spectacular choreography, and its nostalgic evocations, this film pivots around the mythology of the tango.⁴¹ Through the commanding paradigm of *cultura porteña*, the film constructs identity as the unfinished project. While the axis Buenos Aires-Paris operates as its territorial boundary, *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* journeys from a sense of loss into a critical awareness of its own eccentricity. The film centres on a group of Argentine exiles, and on the attempt to produce a show in Paris written on scraps of paper in Buenos Aires. The claustrophobic *mise en scène* of the ‘tangedy’, a musical show that is tragedy and comedy, the phantasmagoric enclosure of Carlos Gardel’s performance in a smoke-filled Palais Royal, and the pictorial baroque of settings filled with mannequins and shredded paper appear to reinforce the containment of fragmented identities. However, the unifying configurations of Argentine culture are interjected by dissenting voices. They belong to Maria and her young friends, and simultaneously to Fernando Ezequiel Solanas who wrote the tangos they perform in the exteriors of the Parisian exile. The four movements of the film are activated by the unwillingness to be coerced by the nostalgia of nationalism.

The diverse historical forms of the tango are the main protagonist of the film, bridging cultural difference through the alliance between its Argentine origins and its European success, between its past and present. Symbolised by the phantoms of Gardel and Discépolo, embodied by the dancers of the ballet Núcleo Danza of Buenos Aires, and composed by Astor Piazzolla and José Luis Castiñeira de Dios, the tango performs the role of a legendary, yet changing, signifier. *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* is structured like a dialectical rondo, the sensuous rhythms of the tango and the *milonga* are central to the pleasurable engagement between the viewers and the text.⁴² It is arguable that one of the film’s main achievements lies in its cross-cultural patternings of spectatorship. (Although it is beyond the intent of this article, I want to point that much has been written about the homo-erotic aspect of the traditional tango. *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* could benefit from a gendered reading because the choreography of the film operates ambiguously in regard to the specularization of the body.)

The nostalgic melodies of *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*, like laments that counter absence, are thoroughly obsessed by stories of origin. The emblematic narrative of exile, played on a gramophone by the ghost of Carlos Gardel, is the mythical tango ‘Volver’. This song disengages Buenos Aires from geography and exalts the return as a means to recapture the placement of the city in memory. This still popular tango also

⁴⁰ See Paulo-Antonio Paranagua, ‘Entretien avec Fernando E Solanas’ *Positif* No 297, November 1985, p 25.

⁴¹ Julie M Taylor draws some crucial parallels between *Martin Fierro* and the tango by stressing historical and socio-cultural filiations between these two texts of Argentine identity. See ‘Tango: Theme of Class and Nation’ in *Ethnomusicology* No 20, 1976, pp 273, 291.

⁴² I would like to thank Peter Harcourt, my friend and colleague at Carleton University, for his useful and always imaginative suggestions on the musical idioms of the film.

⁴³ Alicia Dujovne Ortiz. 'Buenos Aires. (An Excerpt)' in *Discourse* op cit, p 75.

⁴⁴ It is hence understandable that Solanas would honour Glauber Rocha by dedicating *Sur* (1988) to the most experimental filmmaker of the New Latin American cinema.

⁴⁵ 'Marginal Cinemas and Mainstream Critical Theory,' London, *Screen*, Vol 26, No 3-4, May-August 1985, p 14.

celebrates the original investment of exile in its history. Although born in the red light district of a port city, the tango arrived from the interior brought by the gauchos at the end of the century, and transformed in a migratory weaving of Argentine and European influences before it succeeded in the Parisian dancing halls. As its title suggests, *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* indicates the heterogeneity of musical form in which traditional idioms mingle with contemporary forms to express loss and the burden of layered migrations. The tango is representation and discourse, familiar in its codifications and fascinating in its endurance as a site of Argentine nationality. Solanas' film constructs national identity in an oblique way not unlike 'Buenos Aires' relative identity – [that] exists only to the extent that Europe looks at it. The city was born in this play of mirrors, in this complicity of reflection'.⁴³ Maybe at the point when Argentines are seeking to eradicate the authoritarian symbols that marked their recent history, a de-centered view risks severing national consciousness from its desire for consensus.

The cinema of Fernando Ezequiel Solanas, despite its reliance on historically-informed narratives of cultural identity, opens a provocative space for dialectical operations of spectatorship and pleasure. This strategy is effective in so far as it aspires to move away from the documentary realism that has marked, from the outset, the politics of New Latin American Cinema. What certainly needs to be argued is that a film like *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel*, although taking advantage of the renewed popularity of the tango in Europe, remains very much attached to the critically expressive innovation that has periodically characterised the cinemas of Argentina, Brazil and Cuba.⁴⁴ The cinema of Fernando Ezequiel Solanas, while affiliated to the strategies that pattern the Argentine imaginary, has clearly detached itself from the aesthetic tendencies that have characterised Argentine cinema since the 1960s. However, far from marking a clear rupture from its original formation, this practice in exile performs within the 'dynamic and flexible typology' of the New Cinema of Latin America. As Julianne Burton has suggested, the oppositional strategies of Third World filmmaking 'rather than becoming more cohesive over the past two decades . . . [have] become more "diffuse", demonstrating varying degrees of marginality and oppositionality'.⁴⁵

Three Crowns of a Sailor and *Tangos: The Exile of Gardel* suggest that the landscape of exile is saturated by a discordant expressiveness. The winding fabulation of the first, and the operative sensuality of latter herald the poetic re-territorialisation of an imaginary that struggles against the perplexities of displacement. The multi-lingual and international codifications that constitute subjectivity in these films are indicative of the diversity of contestational cultural practices. Through the dialectical wanderings of exile, the cinemas of Raúl Ruiz and Fernando Ezequiel Solanas reclaim a progressive space for nostalgia from where memory is transformed. Far from operating in secure unanimity, national identity in exile can perform in the embattled ground of ideology as its belligerent and inventive *other*.



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NEWS REVIEWS LETTERS

VIDEO ART AND COLONIALISM: AN OTHER AND ITS OTHERS

SEAN CUBITT REVIEWS RETROSPECTIVES OF BILL
VIOLA AND NAM JUNE PAIK

¹ Cf. Stuart Marshall, 'Video - Technology and Practice', *Screen* vol 20 no 1, Spring 1979, pp 109-119; Stuart Marshall, 'Video - From Art to Independence', *Screen*, vol 26, no 2, March-April 1985, pp 66-71; Pat Sweeney, 'Casual Production', *Screen*, vol 26 no 2, March-April 1985, pp 73-76.

² Cf for example Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot (eds) *Video Art: An Anthology*, New York, Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1976.

³ Peter D'Agostino (ed), New York, Tanam, 1985.

VIDEO ART: the term itself seems to harbour a contradiction. Not only the age of mechanical reproduction, but the age of electronics lie between us and the primitive aura of the Western art tradition. And this journal has had its part in a history in which the terms of art discourse - creation, genius, author - have been systematically emptied of their relevance to film and broadcast analysis. This is perhaps why articles on video art have been few and far between in the pages of *Screen* and its erstwhile sister journal:¹ it is a practice which engages in wholly other spaces, the world of gallery distribution, of sculptural installations, of performance art. An analysis firmly based in materialist principles has trouble with the resistant avant-gardism and art-based idealism of the term 'video art'. The play through cybernetics and ecology, the unlikely mixes of Zen and MacLuhan in tapemakers' accounts of themselves² are no simpler to negotiate.

Video art: curious that so fundamentally technology-defined an area of work should emerge into the world of art, even while it defines itself in terms of a relation to television - Paik's 'Art for 25 Million People/Bonjour Mr Orwell' show, the earlier (1969) and crucial New York exhibition 'TV as a Creative Medium', a book-title like *Transmission: Theory and Practice for a New Television Aesthetics*³ testify to the relation to broadcast. Yet Paik's *Family of Robot*, showing in London's Hayward Gallery in the winter of 1988, is as far removed from broadcast as can be imagined, even while broadcasting gives some of the raw material processed in the multiple screens. Broadcasting is, in any case, very much a matter of national sovereignties (though see Morley and Robbins' arguments in this issue): its processing in Paik's work is, in intention at least, internationalising. Paik's work addresses TV as a whole - the apparatus as well as the texts - as we might express in cinema more than in films. From an initial interest in the medium as a negation of TV, through a phase of self-exploration, and into the third term, negating the two previous ones and introducing a far closer relation with tools other than the camera, the ensemble of practices assembled around the name 'Paik'

acts like a map of the central concerns of video art, and importantly a history in which the origin as opposition to (national) television is a recurrent theme. This article asks what challenges the practice of electronic art forms poses to the orthodoxies of the national identity debate.

It has to be acknowledged that national formations have an important impact on the development of video art. The art establishment in the United Kingdom has in general been slow to react to the emergence of the new form, despite brave attempts from the Arts Council and, latterly, the British Film Institute. Yet video is still seen as a poor sister of film, as here, for example, in Kobena Mercer's and Isaac Julien's introduction to a recent issue of *Screen*: 'Data compiled by June Givanni elsewhere indicates some of the characteristics that constitute black British film as a "minor" cinema: the prevalence of material of short duration, shot on video, and in the documentary genre, indicates a pattern of underfunding, or rather, taking the variety of the work into consideration, a considerable cultural achievement that has been won against the odds of meagre resourcing'.⁴ A constant cultural referent emerges here as the easy way in which low-budget work can be automatically read off from the use of electronic cameras. Video is neither cheaper to produce than film (higher editing costs cover the relative cheapness of stock) nor is it necessarily chosen as a medium for purely fiscal reasons. Yet the hegemonic pretensions of 'film culture' to incorporate video, like that other, art-originated reading of the form which sees it only in a relation with television, pushes video out to a marginal position with regard to art and to film and to broadcasting.

That video has often been an option for women, young people, black and South Asian Britons has increased its distance from the heartlands of 'the culture' in the UK (noticeably more parochial and isolated in this sphere than any other European or North American country). Institutionally and discursively, broadcasting's Other, whether the video art discussed in this article or the more obviously politicised community and trades union off-air sector,⁵ is the lowly and despised Other in the light of whose poverty the wealth of film or the power of broadcasting may be made to shine. While ostensibly we are aware of the emergent dominance of the electronic media, there is a tendency among critics and reviewers to dismiss video on any one of a number of grounds: David Byrne's and Stephen R Johnson's tape *Road to Nowhere* for Talking Heads is too slick; TV's East End anarchist account of the Wapping dispute, *Despite the Sun*, is too amateurish; Isaac Julien's own directorial debut, Sankofa's *Who Killed Colin Roach?* now appears not as video but as evidence – of underfunding. Corporate video is not television, video is not film, tape is not broadcast and video art is shunted between the art critic, the film reviewer and the TV columnist.

Two exhibitions in London late in 1988 have broken the capital's usual reluctance to give major gallery space to video art: Bill Viola at the Riverside Studios and Nam June Paik at the Hayward Gallery. The

⁴ 'Introduction: De Margin and De Centre' in *Screen* vol 29 no 4, Autumn 1988. The reference is to June Givanni, *Black and Asian Film List*, BFI, 1988.

⁵ Cf John Roberts, 'Sinn Fein and Video: Notes on a Political Pedagogy', *Screen* vol 29 no 2, pp 94-97.

Viola show featured a retrospective of single-monitor pieces and the installation *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House*, and was held at a small, locally-financed, non-commercial space. The Paik was an expensive show made up of the seven members of *Family of Robot* plus three related works, *Passage*, *Monument* and *Connection*, six video chairs, eight other installations, a selection of laser and video-generated still images and a retrospective of 16 single-monitor pieces from *Global Groove* (1973) to *Digital Zen* (1988). The Hayward is part of the prestigious arts complex on the South Bank, which includes the National Theatre, the National Film Theatre, a cluster of concert halls and the newly-opened Museum of the Moving Image where Paik also has a work, *Satellite Baby*, on permanent exhibition.

Bill Viola, colonist

When the Hollywood pioneers began to make their movies – Douglas Fairbanks as Zorro for example – there was still the innocence of those for whom the colonial process was incomplete: the delicious irony of fighting for the liberation of Los Angeles from the Spanish viceroy. The final stage of colonialism is withdrawal – from the standpoint of the colonist, although it may be analysed as neo-colonialism from the standpoint of the colonised. The dialectic of return is incomplete in North America. It is for this reason that the issue of the relation to colonised peoples is returned to so often in the cultural domain: because it is unfinished business in the hurtling day-to-day realities of American life. This in turn relates to the return, in fiction, to the Spanish and to the pioneers – not the early settlers, in whom too clearly the weight of history emerges in the tragic divisions of their souls between the savagery of the land and the utopian obsessions of rationalism or religious fundamentalism. Not them, but their fictional counterparts, the cowboys, with their longing to bring reason to the land, that relation not to people but to the very landscapes in which they have their being.

The relation that emerges in the landscape segments of *I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like*, the 90-minute cornerstone of the Viola show, is doubly confounded by an English writer's immersion in another imaginary relation to the colonial lands, a relation in which those primary colours are always tinted with absence. There is an impossible regret which emerges in the contemplation of the natural in the English breast. In mine, that is commingled with a second sense of loss relating to my parents' origins in Ireland: a country of legend, impossible to return to, a country perhaps, from a cynical standpoint, from which mercenaries go forth to build or to defend the imperium of others. In *I Do Not Know*, what is in play is not nostalgia. Viola, I suspect, sees himself as something like a prospector, someone whose touch on the country is light, whose forays into the land are only for what they bring of difference from the society which otherwise he inhabits. On the other hand, those

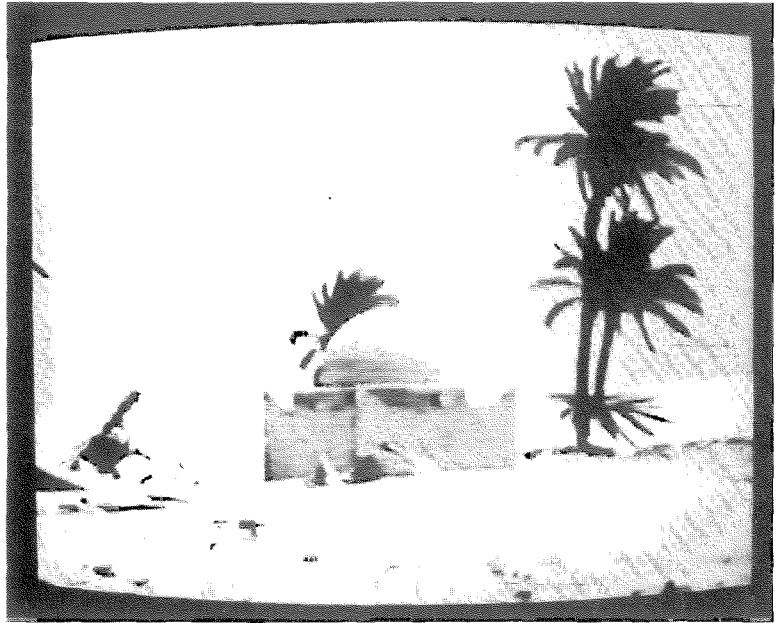
disappearances from the everyday have to be brought back into the everyday: that is their price. Some part of him merely needs to know that they are there. Yet belief requires some repeatable experience: a tape. But then that is what I want to extract from the tape, in part: an entrée into another consciousness, in this instance a consciousness *of* – of landscape, for example.

The sadness of video is its obeisance to mechanical time. The joy of *I Do Not Know* is its effort towards eliminating that sense of time through a mode of perception that is neither intellectual nor yet emotional, a belief in the perfectibility of contemplation. At the same time, the tape is edited. Edits do not announce themselves. The cutting is more like that of Frederick Wiseman than anyone else: a documentary cut that appeals to our expectations of the documentary, that it be impartial, even natural. What returns us to the material of video is the soundtrack. An initial gambit with music demonstrates the professional skill of the artist but performs simultaneously a specific gesture towards the splendid artificiality of the shot (the camera moves below the waterlevel in a lake, likewise the mike, so that the music shifts from the soundtrack to the 'profilmic', to reality in the world of the tape).

The prospector listens in order to attune his ear to the sounds of this natural world. But now the ear is electronic, and the sound is not of distant winds sighing in the trees but the rasp of air moving over the mike. Ironically, the foregrounding of the mike, of the means of production, also foregrounds the presence of the mike in that real world. It pushes the soundtrack into the realm of the camera-eye, the physical sensation of being there – on the prairie, with bison. Likewise with the scenes of decay that punctuate the tape: how close do you wish to get to death? How much of an account of death does this physical process of bison or fish decaying into the earth give? What relation can these animal deaths have to living human consciousness – or so it seems to ask. Yet the power of this contemplative mode of viewing is that it allows the question in the first place. With *Chott El-Djerid*, a slightly earlier tape playing on desert and snow mirages, the motion of the image and the merciful absence of the irritating *zazzzzzzzhhiinnnnnnngngngngngngnggggg* which makes up Hollywood's account of desert sounds, nonetheless returns us constantly to the concerns of the West, with the surfaces that so entrance us, the painterlines of the videoscreen. Yet even there, the power of that contemplative gaze outlasts the edits.

The figure of the owl presents a different set of issues in *I Do Not Know*: the alienness of that bird's gaze into the lens, the rigidity with which the bird maintains its birdness, the unrelenting watch of a bird whose eyes are attuned to hunting – the position of the spectator is that of a mouse before the gaze of its predator. Looking is not here like the triangle of looks in the descriptions familiar from Laura Mulvey's work.⁶ Looking entails no human emotion yet. The question that emerges is finally ethical, and it is this elasticity between the contemplative and the ethical which most moved me in watching Viola's tape.

⁶ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' *Screen* vol 16 no 3, pp 6-27.



Bill Viola: 'Chott El-Djerid: A portrait in Light and Heat'

⁷ *October* 34, Fall 1985, p 119.

⁸ 'Why Look at Animals?' in *About Looking*, Writers and Readers, London, 1980, pp 3-4.

The question of becoming, the already achieved issue of becoming, before a camera which precedes but finally cannot, could not, dominate the playback, the eye of the owl poses as a question. And to enter into dialogue, as any question must, is to enter into and accept a contract, or to accept your presence for another, or finally to accept the presence, not of the tape, but of the owl and its unreturned and unreturnable gaze.

Raymond Bellour concludes an interview with Viola conducted in 1984 and early 1985⁷ with a short postscript: 'Since the interview, Bill Viola wrote to me, "I have just received a grant from the American Film Institute to do a new tape about animals. I'm trying to become artist in residence at the San Diego Zoo"'. *I Do Not Know* might be that tape, certainly there are shots of animals – especially the birds – in zoos and a credit to San Diego. Would an artist in residence in a zoo have to stay in a cage? Viola does not. But he does confront there an historical passage from the peasantry to capitalist culture, from the anthropomorphism of a culture close to animals and measuring itself against and through them, to a culture in which they are enslaved, brutalised, rendered spectacular. As John Berger notes, in the exchange of looks between people: 'the *existence* of language allows that at least one of them, if not both mutually, is confirmed by the other. Language allows men [sic] to reckon with each other as with themselves . . . No animal confirms man, either positively or negatively . . . its lack of common language, its silence, guarantees its distance, its distinctness, its exclusion, from and of man'.⁸ The zoo, Berger argues, emerges in part as evidence of colonial power, like the great museums, in the age of imperial capitalism.



Bill Viola: 'I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like'

Yet in zoos the marginalisation of animals is completed: they can no longer be the centre of the spectator's gaze: what we look at is the monumental moment of their disappearance from human culture.

Viola can be the presenter of the colonised because of this missing dialectic. If the coloniser is forced into re-presentation⁹ the issue is: what is the relation of the colonised to the land? Presentation? Viola presents the land. The fact that the presentation is mediated is itself presented, not represented. I have argued elsewhere that video's relation with silence is privileged¹⁰ – video can *be* silent where film can only represent silence. Here also silence is the ground from which the tape can attract vision, but also that from which the soundtrack emerges. What in a film would be 'wild track' is here sync sound, but it is also proof that the equipment was once *here*, the bonus which improves the communication of an impression of reality. Viola goes for the reality principle – a Bazin of the video – save that the route to the real is via the technology. Yet it is not the artist but the viewer who supplies the reality effect. The viewer is invited to reconstruct the artist's experience of the taping as their own experience.

At the same time, there are many other routes through Viola's oeuvre. The experience of watching the 1979 tape *Chott El-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat)* rolls between one of illusionism – here is the Sahara, here is frozen Saskatchewan – and another of sheer flatness that Clement Greenberg would have liked, while Viola's own account is of 'a synthesis between the inside [technology] and the outside [the mirage of the landscape]'.¹¹ The overwhelming otherness of the mirage-veiled land-

⁹ Homi K Bhabha, 'Sly Civility', *October* 34, Fall 1985.

¹⁰ 'Timeshift', *Screen* vol 29 no 2, Spring 1988, pp 74-81.

¹¹ Catherine Elwes, 'Quiet Moments With Nature: An Interview with Bill Viola' in *Independent Media* 82, October 1988, p 4.

¹² Barbara London (ed),
Bill Viola, Museum of
Modern Art, New
York, 1988, p 37.

¹³ Barbara London (ed),
Bill Viola, op cit,
p 51.

scape leads also in further possible directions: elsewhere Viola suggests 'a transformation of the physical into the psychological... If one believes that hallucinations are the manifestation of some chemical or biological imbalance in the brain, then mirages and desert heat distortions can be considered hallucinations of the landscape. It was like physically being inside someone else's dream'.¹² Question: in the last sentence quoted, is the 'it' the tape or the experience of making it (as the tense of the verb suggests)? And in either case, who is or was the someone into whose dream an access becomes possible? Is this too a colonial relation?

Viola's relation to Japan in several of the tapes, his proximity (shared with Gary Hill and indeed many other West Coast artists, like poet Gary Snider or pop guru Alan Watts) to Japanese Buddhism, emerges in the sequence of time-lapse photography in *Hatsu Yume (First Dream)* in which the permanence of a rock is pointed up by the fleeting passage of ghostly tourists around, beside, in front of it: a presence of another order, a presence which has as purpose to point up the relative lack of presence of human subjects. Yet there is still the need for a human mind – and its technologies – to register the relation and the scale at which it is effective, a scale in which a rock is both important and unimportant. Yet, again, it cannot be without impact that the humans by whom the permanence of the rock is measured are not simply 'people': they are Japanese people.

The soundtrack to *Anthem* (1983), perhaps Viola's best-known tape in Britain, is a scale of notes generated by modulating 'a single piercing scream emitted by an eleven-year-old girl' who is also East Asian.¹³ *Anthem*, like *I Do Not Know*, is immense in its reverberations: an artwork which describes the trajectories of technologies – architecture, industry, leisure, surgery – towards the common edge of perception and death (more coyly 'the separation of the body and spirit' in the MOMA catalogue [p 51]). What is so fascinating is the constant return, not only in Viola's work but across a range of video practice, of spirituality as a touchstone. Returning with a rhythmic insistence like the ocean: what repressed of the post-modern is taking on these religious guises in order to be reborn?

The experience, to come back at it another way, of Viola's work is an inscription in the field of the visible. The necessity of being seen, as a condition of seeing, resolves the dilemmas of the colonial moment in viewing. Even so the juxtaposition of the distanced observer in *I Do Not Know*, catching the images of animals on a minute video screen, with the 'real' experience of the fire-walkers elsewhere in the tape (see interview with Elwes cited above) remains an uncomfortable one. This is not simply because the assumption of the transparency of the medium to one experience and its inability to communicate the other is unsuitably self-contradictory for this kind of analysis, but because the tourist's gaze keeps coming back to haunt us as we watch. Baudelaire imagined his *flâneur* with just such an objective anonymity, but as Griselda Pollock

demonstrates, the objectivity is built on a power relation of sexual difference.¹⁴ Baudelaire's incognito is still seen as a man, with the privilege that bears, just as Viola's eye is still that of the ethnographer. Yet much of the work involves a self-scrutiny, under the eye of the bird, which is specifically in the realm of the visual. In *I Do Not Know*, the tragedy is of the incompleteness of the relation – a visual terrain which, because of the irreversible historical gap between the urban and the animal, between the urbane and the devotee, is riven in two, and in which the human eye is now alone and therefore itself incomplete: in Berger's terms, there is no common language.

Such a theme becomes explicit in *Reverse TV*, a series of portraits of viewers seen from the perspective of the TV set. One review suggests that the piece 'reflects the numbed position of the TV audience by offering the monitor as a mirror to the viewer's own passive image'.¹⁵ I watched something very different: the soundtrack again leading, by placing the portrayed viewers in the context of their own living rooms, emphasising the space of their living, especially in the double portraits. The pace of the viewing, the silence and stillness of the viewers, had an impact like the early photographic portraits described by Benjamin in his *Short History of Photography*,¹⁶ those which, requiring a lengthy, motionless sitting, seem to produce an air of introspection, gravity, momentary transcendence. At the same time, what emerges in terms of the Berger analysis quoted above is that it is the TV itself which has become the condition of language, of a new visual terrain in which mutual recognition, or at least the recognition of one of the parties by the other, is alone possible. Viola here investigates the grounding of group identity through broadcasting as an imagined community.

To be at home: the *Reverse TV* portraits are not negative. This is not to suggest that they are positive. The relation, to return to an earlier example, seems to me to circulate in the grammar of the title *I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like*: the non-identity of the two 'I's, knowledge in question not of what 'I' am but very precisely what 'I' am *like*, the relation of these two questions through a third term, the 'it', itself in question: 'What It'. Reverse portraits allow for a narcissistic gaze, an introspective relation to these others: Is this what it is that I am like, caught looking in the gallery at these still, quiet images of people comfortably settled by their sets? The transcendence emerges from the realisation that the question requires no answer. It is the myth of fingerprints: there are so many individuals, individuality doesn't count – except to the individual. What matters more than individuality is where you are from.

Nam June Paik, Korean

Motorola, Carlson RCA Victor, Philco, Andrea, Capehart, Crosley, Sentinel: the 'antique' cabinets (the term is the catalogue's) of long-

¹⁴ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art*, London, Routledge, 1988, p 63.

¹⁵ Martha McLean, 'Of Anthems and Reverse TV: A Critical View of Bill Viola' in *Independent Media* 82, October 1988, p 19.

¹⁶ *Screen*, vol 13 no 1, Spring 1972, pp 5-26; also translated as 'A Small History of Photography' in Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, London, Verso, 1979, pp 240-257.

¹⁷ Meaghan Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée: Feminism, Reading, Postmodernism*, London, Verso, 1988, pp 118-19.

defunct black and white sets, the sets of infant Americans now ready to take on the mystery of the set: is it TV that we watch? Or is that which has disappeared with the Ecovision and the Baird televisor some irrefragable element of myself (because it is important to be wary of the word 'we') – a childhood? Paik's 'childlike' playfulness, on which his reviewers discourse at length (reviewers because, in Meaghan Morris' neat distinction between reviewer and critic, the reviewer cannot reveal the end and is therefore debarred from discussing structure: in Paik's work, there is no end to reveal)¹⁷ is as apparent in his sculptural use of the bric-à-brac of the nursery – in this instance the old TV relegated to the children's room, hanging on there as a working element long after the demise of the dinosaurs in the 1960s and 70s living rooms of North America – as it is in the simple visual puns of the *Family of Robot*.

There is the childhood of his audience. But there is also the adult in the audience, who enjoys the child's play of Paik's exhibits. Paik as a child is easy to assimilate: he is, after all, Oriental. The colonial relation reemerges: a Korean, disengaged from the experience of war and US imperialism by an innocence which defuses the imperial intention and allows it to relax into indulgence. This is significantly worked through in the poster for the Hayward show, in which the robot grandfather is surrounded by a border of nursery pink, and inset into the composition is a photographic image of Paik's grandfather – gentleman or priest? – in traditional Korean costume, posed formally for the portrait photographer, a photo that seems old, prior to the invasions of mid-20th century, the innocent spectacle of the anthropological curiosity.

Yet Paik's work itself seems to legitimate the colonial gaze. Does he not share the iconography of 1960s and 70s bohemia: Cage, Ginsberg, Beuys, Cunningham? Is he not, with his ceaseless recuperation and reworking of cliché, a colonialist himself? Are not the incessantly flipping and tumbling postcard images of cities in the triumphal arch of *Connection* not the very model of a global colonialism? Like the translucent, inch-long bodies of the tropical fish through which the skittering flow of scratched electronic imagery is to be perceived in *Fish-TV*, the images are stripped of provenance: images of which we need know nothing save their colour and speed. The bodies of the fish resound with the garish colours of the TV screen, itself imitating their unsuitably flashy dress-sense, caught in a loop whose closure is ineffectual, however, because the tape is of a fixed duration and must stop to rewind, and because the fishes, within their glass prisons, are free to move and some of them, their bodies darkening on the sand at the bottom of the tank, to die. The relation is complex.

For a start, even shocked by the death of fish as part of an artwork, by the emergence of death, which is eternally unrepeatable (as art becomes repeatable in the mechanical or electronic ages) and irreversible (as drama is reversible: as fictions may be unmade as well as made) – even brought to a limit point (after all it's only a fish), I am complicit in its end. Enjoyment has its own consequences. On the other hand, not enjoy-

ing has the same consequences. Some kinds of freedom are seriously circumscribed. This is true too of the 'free' play of Paik's tapes, rolling in the same installation: recurrent images of Beuys and his hat, of naked women, of picture-postcard indices of specified towns, cities, tourist spots. Paik plays with tourism as a fund of images, but it is still a fund (a bank, a hoard, a treasure, an economy): trapped in a monetary circulation, caught in the stickiness of the medium it trades in – neo-colonialist rather than neo-TV?¹⁸

The global gesture of some of Paik's work (the *Satellite Chair*, for example) is enabled to make the move only by the reduction of difference to its ciphers – postcard imagery which homogenises and reorders as framed and recognisable. The apocalyptic announcement of the end seems to be coming from the nursery, where the infant is surrounded by toys each one of which is so deeply impregnated with his imperial investments of self in them as to have lost their single identities. They seem to take on, not some whirling simulacral status, but the lineaments of an overwhelming narcissism. And in turn, the motivation for that would seem to be an uncertainty (becoming an aching void) at the heart of the artist. This is not a monstrous ego – the term is patently wrong for Paik's public persona: it is precisely not ego but some moment prior to ego formation, in which the whirling images are engineered to take on the shapes of a more primordial desire – to lie and be at the centre of the universe. *Satellite Baby*, at the centre of the network of satellite news installed at the Museum of the Moving Image: not an uncle or a granny but the infant, Freud's 'His Majesty The Baby'. It is in some ways a reworking of the Romantic conception of childhood as the route to godhead.

'I am a poor man from a poor country so I have to be entertaining every second'¹⁹: what is and is not art is perhaps an imperial gesture as it relates to the producer, but that cannot alleviate the burden on the viewer. In the work of Beuys and, to a lesser but still significant extent in Cage's work in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the liberation of the artist in everyone is part of a broad political project to destabilise the circumscription of art by defining discourses and practices, like the commodity status of artefacts, the gallery system and the artisan-craftworker mode of production. Humanising the technology through direct work on the electron scan is Paik's vital contribution to the culture at its earliest stages, and perhaps an indicator of the still to be realised future of electronic arts – hardware, not software, imposes apparent teleological constraints on communication. Placing various magnets on the cabinet to disrupt the signal in the cathode ray tube, tinkering with the scan-gun to produce a work like *Point of Light*, minimising the technology through the inspired pun of *Candle-TV*: Paik's realisation that the art world cannot recognise work on the image-generating machinery as art leads him to more 'external' and, crucially, *visible* strategies. What is worrying is the way in which this is read back as the genius of an infant, someone whose public persona's grasp of language (the English language in its imperial phase) is notoriously strange, *infans*.

¹⁸ Umberto Eco, 'A Guide to the Neo-Television of the 1980s' in *Framework* 25, 1984, pp 18-27.

¹⁹ Nam June Paik: *Edited for Television*, 1975.

²⁰ Sean Cubitt, 'Magic Hour: An Interview with Frank Abbott', *Framework* 32/33, 1986, p 131.

²¹ 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *October* 28, 1984, pp 125-133.

This is a poor television, the television of the poor man from a poor country. Like a child, he must entertain. In *Suite 212*, one segment replays the domestic and directionless chatter of passers by in Washington Square. The work is Fluxus-inspired: what would a people's TV look like? Frank Abbott's *Magic Hour* (UK, 1986) gives a different perspective on the same issue: amateurism, exhibitionism/voyeurism, the factors which 'the policing of taste, artistry and professionalism usually filter out . . . If we had more participatory forms of television, then they would be more awkward, more unfinished, crude and tense – a search for language in what people already do, what you call amateur or holiday cultures'.²⁰ But Abbott is still worried at the political upshot – that control over distribution networks will determine the extraction of programming from producers, that a popular programme-making environment in the 1980s becomes immediately, and in the nature of contemporary capital, a deregulated one. Paik's populist humanism is all too easily reduced to exploitation on the model of Ugly George, the New York cable operator who persuaded passers-by to strip for the video camera. This is not Paik's fault, but it is part of the rhetoric in which he is celebrated. Paik's humanising gesture, for example in the strikingly beautiful video chairs, is shifted from a subversive play to one which homogenises and thereby makes the global imperium possible.

Postmodern Imperium

Homi Bhabha argues the relation of speech and writing in the formation of colonial discourse.²¹ Colonialism and empire use the written records of government, while the plenitude of speech is reserved for the parliament at the heart of the imperial metropolis. The difference is precisely one of deferral, a Derridean *différance* in which the formal properties of communication are exploited as the means to power. The same message may be available, but the specificity of the rulers is that they are apprised of decisions straight away (and may perhaps, therefore, enter into a dialogue with them), while the ruled are always told too late. Time, the time of communication, is a means to power.

A vivid example of this emerges in the decision in October 1988 by the British Government to institute a ban on broadcast interviews with the IRA or Sinn Féin. A similar ban has operated for ten years in the Republic of Ireland, giving rise to a curious legal problem: can a reporter legitimately refer to a speech, if s/he doesn't actually quote the words? Can a broadcast journalist give an account of the content of a speech? The answer appears to be a resounding yes, according to the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, *speaking* in parliament and on broadcast. The purpose of the legislation will be to remove from the IRA and Sinn Féin the right of *speech*, seen as unmediated in the form of broadcasting. This fits well with the current state of judicial practice in the six counties, where Diplock courts can arraign, try and condemn suspected IRA

activists without benefit of jury *hearing*, supposedly the backbone of the British democratic system.

The move from speech to writing is then a profoundly colonial one. It concerns the relation of time to power, and of control over the means of dissemination. This is where Baudrillard's whirligig model of history is so tremendously inadequate. Like some prophet of monetarism drunk on the 'freedom' of the free market, he hurls his imagery into colossal, all-engulfing and synchronous vortices in which everything and every consciousness is affected simultaneously. Yet this is manifestly not the case. Like the Tory wealth which supposedly trickles down – yet takes a seeming age to do so – Baudrillard's precession of simulacra hurtle differentially for different people. The universe, as the scientists now say, is lumpy: there are patches where matter and energy have aggregated, and others where there should be stuff, but there is not. In the circulation of discourse, the intersection of power/knowledge and the production of meaning is so intense that it operates, precisely in temporal flows, to institute a regime of meanings, hierarchies of readings, layers of access. The radical 'equality' of the cultural market in Baudrillard is as untrue as the meritocratic rationalisations of monetarists. Both will ultimately create an immiserated underclass: poor and information-poor.

At the same time, what psychoanalytic perspectives might we apply to a man who wishes to deny the physicality of origination? The absence of genitalia as marks of sexual difference in *Family of Robot* allows Paik to be both sexual and yet ungendered and infantile, an effect deepened by the silence of the family. Since the notion of family rests four-square on the procreative act, the absence of the figures of its possibility suggest a Utopian or neurotic fantasy of the act, a fear of (sexual) origin which produces in turn a phantasm of generation without origin, of creation *ex nihilo*, the fantasy of continuous being or, finally, Baudrillard's hyper-real. In these circumstances, Paik's movements around a poor TV, or his other strategies in multiply-recycled images take on a seriousness which needs a serious address. However, their success within the limited ambit of legitimate art circles in the UK and North America raises a further issue – what is this quality which, in Viola's *I Do Not Know* and the Video-Chairs, strikes home with a powerful emotive reach, beauty, challenge: since something in this work clearly does speak strongly, though in unfamiliar tones. The terminology of postmodernism is unhelpful: spurning description and definition, it remains determinedly prescriptive, nowhere more so than in discourses about video.

A symptomatic commentary in this regard is Fredric Jameson's 'La Lecture sans l'interprétation'.²² Jameson is in imperial mode, bringing in the English Literary figure of the text as the central point of his analysis. This allows him to base a global analysis on one tape and two references (other than to his own work). Of the references, one is to a collection containing only one essay on video,²³ while the other devotes 120 of its 300 pages to reprinting well-known essays by Benjamin, Brecht,

²² *Communications* 48, numéro spéciale: vidéo, Seuil, Paris, 1988, pp 105-124.

²³ Maureen Turim, 'Video Art: Theory for a Future', in E Ann Kaplan (ed), *Regarding Television*, University Publications of America/American Film Institute, 1983.

²⁴ John Hanhardt (ed)
*Video Culture: A
Critical Investigation*,
Peregrine Smith
Books, Layton, Utah,
1986.

²⁵ Jameson, *op cit* p 206.

²⁶ *Ibid* p 107.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p 107.

Althusser, Enzensberger and Baudrillard.²⁴ On the basis of these two references, he allows himself to observe that the recurrent theme of video theory is the absence, delay, repression or even the impossibility of a theorisation of video.²⁵ Carefully preparing the ground, Jameson argues for an 'autonomous theory' of video, freed, in particular, from the procedures of film theory. However, he then deals systematically with video as text. In speaking of video time as *durée*, for example, he can be explicit about the effectivity of texts: 'this is precisely machine time, to which these machines that are our spectatorly bodies must adapt themselves, whether we like it or not.'²⁶

This textual strategy is backed up by a major failing of analysis: confusion of broadcast and video, by means of which he can state, quite incorrectly, that Williams' early concept of continuous flow is the only commonly accepted framework for analysis (even the essays in the Kaplan collection he cites could have informed him differently). This allows in turn for video to join the undifferentiated textuality of Baudrillard's hyperreal, removing all the qualities that make it distinct and which have found such recognition among practitioners. For example, video is 'in a certain sense "anonymous" in the good sense of the word [as in mediaeval production, for example]',²⁷ yet artist's use of video as a mode of self-exploration and confession is one of its most dramatic and widely discussed qualities (cf Raymond Bellour's 'Autoportraits' in the same issue of *Communications*). This combination of literary strategies with the confusion of television and video allows more radical – and cumulative – failures of analysis.

'What characterises the video process in particular is the constant rotation of elements, so that they change place at every instant . . .' (p 116): the discursive generalisations of postmodernism seem to drive Jameson into missing the point, for example, of the contemplative gaze of Viola's work. 'Whatever could be considered a good or even great video text would be bad or defective everytime that an interpretation revealed itself as possible, every time the text permitted such spaces for thematisation' (p 117): this deracination of video from the terms of its production and consumption, its roots in the linguistic and broadcast identities of makers and viewers alike, belongs to the act of interpretation itself, an act in the process of disguising itself and eradicating the purposiveness of video work from Chile to Colchester. 'One would like to defend the proposition that the most profound "subject" of all video art, and even of all postmodernism, is very precisely the reproductive technology itself' (p 119). This last statement, itself remarkably close to Greenbergian modernism, is mercifully covered by the realisation that 'if all video texts designated simply the process of production/reproduction, then they would all have to own up to being "the same" in a particularly sterile manner' (p 119). Yet this homogeneous sterility is exactly the outcome to which his arguments tend: 'There remains to us only this pure and arbitrary play of signifiers which we call postmodernism . . . the logic of postmodernism which I have tried to portray in its strongest,

most original and most authentic form in the youthful art of experimental video' (p 120).

The metaphors of strength and weakness which weave in and out of Jameson's text act like the return of the repressed of post-modernism: empire, totalitarianism and the feminine. Imperialist because, in common with other apologists for the postmodern, Jameson imposes the US academy's élitist and reactionary rewriting of 'French Theory' on a whole domain of practice whose specificity he has not investigated. The conditions and practices of artists and viewers alike, the activity of work in the making and viewing of video material, are emptied of their materiality. At the same time he implies that 'the omnipresence of the media' (p 105) in 'the new media society' (p 109, my emphasis) are truly global effects of historical change: everywhere, in a single society. This imperial rhetoric obliterate as no longer real that majority of the world's population who are not saturated with media: the developing nations, the homeless of the industrial world, those excluded from the media by disability... The imperial gesture of postmodernism is complicit in the homogenising ideologies of the postmodern.

By the same token these arguments are totalitarian, insisting on the impossibility of global systems of thought – including the most important popular political movements of our era, ecological, anti-apartheid and anti-nuclear movements – in favour of a disabling metaphysics of the end of history, disguised in the myth that there can be no future since history is already over.²⁸ That this fatalism provides an alibi for philosophy in the place of field research and style in the place of journalism should make us think of Benjamin's formula concerning the aestheticisation of politics. We should at the same time be wary of the demand that we no longer think in terms of macro-political structures, especially in an age in which eco-politics is the fastest-growing new movement. There shall be no local, the arguments seem to run, and there shall be no global, merely the fantasmatic plenitude of the totalising, central Code. It is in the difficulties of their differences – from their audience, from the pro-filmic – and in the specificity of their interaction with the media around them that Viola and Paik resist, in their works, the easy platitudes of the Post. Such heteroglossia and dialogism is a central point of resistance against the hegemonic claims of the New Right of media theory.

²⁸ Cf Jean Baudrillard, 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place', *Futur*Fall: Excursions into Post-Modernity*, ed E A Grosz et al, Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney, 1986, pp 18-28.

CRITIQUE OF POOR REASON

WARREN BUCKLAND REVIEWS NOEL CARROLL'S 'MYSTIFYING MOVIES: FADS AND FALLACIES IN CONTEMPORARY FILM THEORY'

Introduction

*This book is designed to explore several of the central concepts, presuppositions, and doctrines of the dominant film theory for the express purpose of challenging them. Specifically, I shall argue that in their attempts to show how movies purportedly mystify spectators, contemporary film theorists, in fact, mystify our understanding of cinema.*¹

Noel Carroll launched his first major 'onslaught' upon the contemporary film theorists' 'poor reasoning' in his 1982 review article (published in *October*²) of Stephen Heath's *Questions of Cinema*.³ This prompted a devastating reply from Heath, accusing Carroll of 'amalgamation, falsification, construction of straw positions against which to argue, skillful deployment of ignorance, and so on'.⁴

In *Mystifying Movies*, Carroll has extensively developed the extremely polemical interpretation of contemporary film theory presented in his review article. The book's structure of argumentation, together with the reasons for rejecting contemporary film theory, conform largely to those presented in the review – at least concerning the concepts discussed in both: the Althusserian-Lacanian paradigm, the illusion-theory of the cinematic image, narrative, and cinematic narration. The main additions in the book include: a discussion of film music, a condemnation of Jean-Louis Baudry's theory of the cinematic apparatus, and the arguments presented by Metz in 'The Imaginary Signifier' and 'The Fiction Film and its Spectator: A Metapsychological Study'.⁵

Carroll's main premise is to regard all these theories as forms of scientific reasoning. His strategy of analysis is to 'reveal' the unscientific structure predominant in these theories, particularly their apparently fallacious deployment of scientific metaphors and their equivocal use of a number of key terms such as 'position', 'centre', 'coherence' etc.

Carroll bases his critique upon the methodology of Analytic philosophy, which is characterised by a concern for clear, objective reasoning, purportedly achieved through the application of logic and the

¹ Noel Carroll, *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, p 2. All other page references will be cited in the text.

² 'Address to the Heathen', *October* 23, Winter 1982, pp 89-163.

³ *Questions of Cinema*, London, Macmillan, 1981.

⁴ 'Le Pere Noel', *October* 26, Fall 1983, p 66.

⁵ Baudry, 'The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema', *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, Philip Rosen ed, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986, pp 299-318. Both the Metz articles appear in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, London, Macmillan, 1983, pp 3-87 and 101-147 respectively.

methodology of science to the analysis of philosophical problems, leading to the unconditional avoidance of error in order to establish 'the truth'. However, following Stanley Aronowitz and a number of recent philosophers of science, I will argue that the truth-values of each theoretical paradigm are predominantly (although not exclusively) relative to the social and historical determinations from which they emerged.⁶ Because Analytic philosophy presents itself as objective, rather than acknowledging itself to be relatively autonomous, it is open to the charge of scientific imperialism, for its own norms and values are presented as the absolute standard against which to interpret the norms and values of other paradigms.

This scientific imperialism structures Carroll's argument in *Mystifying Movies*. His interpretation of contemporary film theory as a scientific discourse leads him to condemn it for not strictly adhering to scientific standards. The problem raised by this form of interpretation is not merely that Analytic philosophy presents itself as the only legitimate paradigm based on 'true', 'objective' knowledge; it also fails to take into account the fact that the arguments, questions, methodology, and the ultimate aims of a theoretical paradigm are developed on pragmatic grounds. This realisation necessitates the need to interpret each paradigm primarily in terms of its context, not exclusively in terms of the interpreter's context. In this respect, then, the premises of each paradigm cannot be judged in terms of absolute standards of truth or falsity, but rather in terms of their effectiveness or ineffectiveness in relation to the aims of the paradigm in which they were developed. This point has been made clear by the post-Analytic philosopher Donald Davidson: 'When we attribute a belief, a desire, a goal, an intention, or a meaning to an agent, we necessarily operate within a system of concepts in part determined by the structure of beliefs and desires of the agent himself.'⁷

The radical opposition between Carroll and the contemporary film theorists is largely the result of this extreme interpretation of their arguments totally in terms of the norms of scientific reasoning. This imperialistic standpoint inevitably decontextualises and reformulates the contemporary film theorists' arguments, leaving them wide open to criticism because they were not formulated within the context of scientific reasoning and its 'quest' for objective truth. Rather, these arguments were formulated within a critique of science and objective truth (hence the problem, within this framework, of Althusser's epistemological distinction between science and ideology). Heath makes a similar objection to Carroll's reformulation of his film theory in his reply to Carroll's 'Address to the Heathen': 'A golden rule of the "Address" . . . is to convert one argument or position into another which is then available as a handy target.'⁸

Carroll also develops an alternative, cognitive psychological, theory of spectatorship in *Mystifying Movies*, which permits us to associate it with two books reviewed in *Screen* by Barry King: David Bordwell's *Nar-*

⁶ Stanley Aronowitz, *Science as Power: Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society*, London, Macmillan, 1988; Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1984; Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford, 1984; Joseph Margolis, *Pragmatism Without Foundations*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986; Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

⁷ 'Psychology as Philosophy', *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford, Oxford, 1980, p. 230.

⁸ 'Le Pere Noel', *op cit*, p. 75.

⁹ Barry King, 'The Story Continues, or the Wisconsin Project Part II', *Screen* vol 28 no 3, 1987, pp 56-82; David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* Methuen, 1986; Edward Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema*, Mouton, 1984.

¹⁰ 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, Philip Rosen ed, pp 286-298.

ration in the Fiction Film and Edward Branigan's *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film*.⁹ Carroll justifies the cognitive psychological paradigm over contemporary film theory, in explaining the activity of the spectator in film viewing, by arguing that the latter's Marxist-psychoanalytic framework mystifies our understanding of movies by presenting them as complex, irrational discourses that delude the unwary spectator. And Carroll's primary contention with the contemporary film theorists centres precisely on their claim that film is inherently a discourse of capitalist ideology. The reason behind this claim is to be located in the contemporary film theorists' appropriation of Saussurean linguistics. Contemporary film theory forms part of the 'second semiology' dominated by questions of the subject, as formulated in the theories of Althusser and Lacan. Within this Saussurean-Althusserian-Lacanian paradigm, the contemporary film theorists take as their starting point the play of presence and absence that structures semiotic systems, and attempt to explain the psychic effects this play manifests in the spectator. Hence Metz, in 'The Imaginary Signifier', describes the unconscious Imaginary processes of subject formation (particularly identification, voyeurism, and fetishism) supposedly inherent in the filmic signifier that enables the spectator to disavow the signifiers immanent absence, forming the illusion of the presence of a fictional, unified diegesis. Furthermore, this illusion of a fictional unity is projected onto (or introjected into) the spectator, forming a unified subject position open to ideological exploitation.

While Metz argues that this subject position is inherently manifest by the filmic image, Baudry argues that it is inherent in the cinematic apparatus, eg, the projector disavows the difference registered in each filmic frame, creating a seamless, fluid space and movement in the images; the camera lens' perspective system centres the spectator's look etc.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Heath has extended this analysis to the filmic text; in particular, he explains the film's maintenance of this ideological subject position in terms of the classical film's adoption of the conventions of narrative (such as the repetition-transformation-resolution structure), and its employment of the techniques of continuity, or 'invisible', editing. Hence, for the contemporary film theorists, the disavowal of absence, creating the illusion of unified subjects (an illusion necessary to the reproduction of the values of capitalism), pervades every level of the cinema.

Carroll, on the other hand, does not define the image, narrative, and cinematic narration as illusionistic processes. He rejects the notion that the cinema engages the spectator on an unconscious level, and consequently rejects the idea that classical films (or mass entertainment movies) are inherently discourses of capitalist ideology. This is because, within his scientific framework, he regards the spectator to be a unified, rational agent *at the outset*, an agent who consciously, and actively, processes the stimuli manifest on the movie screen. That is, by not stipulat-

ing that movies engage the spectator's psyche on an unconscious level (and therefore do not reproduce capitalist ideology), Carroll instead develops an explanation of the spectator's relation to the film in much simpler terms than the contemporary film theorists' Marxist-psycho-analytic explanation. This simpler explanation, to be discussed towards the end of this review, consists in describing the spectator's cognitive psychological processes employed in watching a movie.

Contemporary film theory needs to be critically analysed at its foundations. However, I differ with Carroll in stipulating the manner in which this critique should be carried out. Briefly, I argue that, because of his scientific standpoint, Carroll analyses contemporary film theory from the outside (with the result that he tends to analyse effects, not causes), whereas I will argue that we need to transform contemporary film theory from the *inside*.

The principle of charity

"Contemporary film theory" has been nothing short of an intellectual disaster and . . . should be discarded. (p 226)

In *Mystifying Movies*, Carroll attempts to convince the reader that the arguments of the contemporary film theorists are total nonsense, that these theorists are mistaken, have been led into extreme error, etc. But this radical standpoint will probably prompt many readers who do not already agree with Carroll to question the causes that give rise to this polemical conflict of ideas. Carroll does not attempt to communicate with anyone outside his own paradigm: the reader he attempts to convince is already convinced.

In a different context, Donald Davidson, in considering the problem of the indeterminacy of translation between two languages (or conceptual schemes),¹¹ argues that we must assume that an agent, whose opinions, beliefs, ideas, etc have been developed within a conceptual scheme different from our own, has a similar set of beliefs etc that we possess.

*We make maximum sense of the words and thoughts of others when we interpret in a way that optimizes agreement [this includes room . . . for explicable error, ie, differences in opinion] . . . we improve the clarity and bite of declaration of difference, whether scheme or shared opinion, by enlarging the basis of shared [translatable] language or of shared opinion.*¹²

*[This] method is not designed to eliminate disagreement, nor can it; its purpose is to make meaningful disagreement possible, and this depends entirely on a foundation – some foundation – in agreement.*¹³

Although Davidson is here questioning the concept of incommensurability posited by relativists between differing conceptual schemes, his comments are directly pertinent to the situation aroused by Carroll's

¹¹ 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', *Inquiries . . .*, pp 183-198.

¹² *ibid* p 197.

¹³ *ibid* pp 196-7.

¹⁴ *Inquiries . . .*, pp 125-140.

¹⁵ 'Davidson and Social Science', *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, Ernest LePore ed, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, pp 291-2.

¹⁶ *Word and Object*, Boston, MIT, 1960, p 59.

interpretation of the norms, values, premises etc of contemporary film theory in terms of those of science, for both Carroll's interpretation and the relativists' concept of incommensurability are imperialistic. And as we have seen, imperialism reformulates, transforms, misrepresents, and systematically distorts the values and norms of the scheme or the theory that has been translated or interpreted, for such an interpretation is carried out on the outside, not the inside, of the theory under interpretation. (My switch from 'translation' between two languages to 'interpretation' language is also made by Davidson in his essay 'Radical Interpretation'.¹⁴ Here Davidson makes it clear that the problem of incommensurability also crops up in a hearer's understanding of a speaker's utterance within the same language (we will come across this idea again in section IV). Hence the principle of charity becomes a relevant norm – in the promotion of understanding – both in interpretation as well as translation.)

The principle of charity is a regulative principle that attempts to avoid the imperialism inherent in translation and interpretation. Failure to observe it breaks down understanding between individuals, social groups, societies etc. For example, Michael Root has convincingly argued that there may exist within psychoanalysis a systematic misunderstanding between analyst and patient because it does not observe the principle of charity:

*The [analyst] must show that the [patient] has good reason to be mistaken in her thoughts about her own attitudes. However, the more mistakes that need to be explained this way, the more reason the [analyst] has for believing that it is she who is mistaken. That is, the more reason she has for believing that she is mistaken about either [a] the beliefs and desires she attributes to the [patient] or [b] the beliefs she attributes to the [patient] about those beliefs and desires. Freud says that my beliefs about my own desires are mistaken and tries to show that though mistaken, given the circumstances, these beliefs of mine are reasonable. However, Freud's evidence for this view of my mind supports a different view equally well; namely that Freud is mistaken in his interpretation of my desires or Freud is mistaken in his interpretation of my beliefs about my desires. In either case it is Freud and not me who has misunderstood the state of my mind.*¹⁵

Or as W V O Quine states (referring to the principle of charity as the 'maxim of translation'): 'The common sense behind the maxim [of translation] is that one's interlocutor's silliness, beyond a certain point, is less likely than bad translation'.¹⁶

It is clear that Carroll does not observe the principle of charity in his interpretation of contemporary film theory. For this reason we must be cautious of his claim that their arguments are no more than sophisticated word play. Instead we must question whether his arguments are merely the result of bad interpretation.

Explanation by means of a pastiche of puns and equivocation is, of course, the hallmark of contemporary film theory. (p 190)

¹⁷ *Introduction to Logic*,
London, Macmillan;
seventh edition, 1986,
p 406.

Carroll's condemnation of contemporary film theory partly focuses upon its 'fallacious' arguments and explanations:

the confusion of belle lettres, on the one hand, with scientific and philosophical reasoning, on the other, is one of the most egregious problems in contemporary film theory. Indeed, the extremely detailed, literal-minded, and argumentative style . . . of this book is mandated by my conviction that contemporary film theorists, with their penchant for belletristic expression, including slippery analogies and metaphors, must be shown that they are using the wrong tools for the tasks at hand. (p 32)

The analysis of fallacious analogies constitutes one of the main approaches taken by Carroll against contemporary film theory. Another consists in 'exposing' their equivocal use of terms such as position, centre, frame, meaning, closure, coherence, binding, homogeneity, unity, fiction, illusion, and realism.

The first major analogy Carroll contests is Baudry's comparison, in his article 'The Apparatus', between film and dream (chapter one). Carroll characterises Baudry's form of reasoning as 'an inductive argument by logical analogy' (p 14). That is, Baudry posits a number of probable hypotheses which express the notion that cinema sufficiently resembles certain psychic phenomena – in this instance, dreams. These analogical hypotheses, which total eight in number, explain for Baudry the 'charged' impression of reality manifest in the cinema in terms of the impression of reality we experience in dreams (what Baudry calls the 'more-than-real'). Moreover, in order for this analogy to function, Baudry posits that the cinema simulates in the spectator a regression to primitive narcissism, a state the individual finds him/herself in when dreaming.

Carroll analyses Baudry's inductive analogical argument, comparing film to dream, in the way logicians traditionally represent this form of argument (concisely summed up by Irving Copi: 'all analogical arguments have the same general structure or pattern. Every analogical inference proceeds from the similarity of two or more things in one or more respects to the similarity of those things in some further respect'¹⁷).

This is how Carroll sets out Baudry's argument in this form:

1 The dream apparatus has the following features: inhibition of movement; lack of reality testing; an imagistic medium; a dark room; projection; a screen; a more than real impression of reality; a tendency to efface the distinction between perception and representation.

2 The cinematic apparatus has exactly the same features noted in premise 1.

¹⁸ See, in particular, Lewin's essay 'Sleep, the Mouth, and the Dream Screen', *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol 15, 1946, pp 419-434.

¹⁹ *ibid* p 420. Cf. Baudry, 'The Apparatus', p 310.

²⁰ Lewin *ibid* p 421.

²¹ 'A Contribution to the Pathopsychology of Phenomena Associated with Falling Asleep', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol XIX, 1938.

3 *A significant animating force behind the dream apparatus is the desire for regression to primitive narcissism, which enactment causes the charged experience of dreams.*

4 *Therefore it is probable that a significant animating force behind the cinematic apparatus is the desire for and regression to primitive narcissism which enactment causes the charged experience of cinema.* (p 18)

Carroll attempts to refute the analogical link Baudry posits between premise 1 and premise 2, in order to reject the hypothesis that cinema simulates a regression to primitive narcissism, an hypothesis which accounts, for Baudry, for the more-than-real impression of reality in the cinema. I shall confine myself to Carroll's analysis of Baudry's analogy between the 'dream screen' and the cinema screen for, as Carroll rightly emphasises, this analogy is 'the linchpin for the inference of regression'. (p 29)

The term 'dream screen' was first posited by the psychoanalyst Bertram Lewin who defined it as the infant's representation of the mother's breast during sleep, and upon which the infant's dream is projected.¹⁸

Carroll challenges Baudry's analogy between the dream screen (breast) and cinema screen by stating that:

*screens are flat; and lactating breasts are not. A screen is, ideally, uniform in color and texture; but the breast has a nipple [remember Carroll has warned us that his arguments in **Mystifying Movies** are extremely literal minded!]. Nor will the association work if it is put forward by saying that breasts are, for the infant, in a state of oral regression, targets of projections as are screens. For according to the theory of primitive narcissism, the mother's breasts are part of an undifferentiated, all-is-one experience, and, therefore, could not have been recognised way back then by the primitive narcissist, and, thus, cannot be recalled now as targets of projection.* (p 29)

Here, Carroll has failed to consider Lewin's detailed account of the dream screen, an account which reinforces Baudry's analogy between dream screen and cinema screen, and which refutes both of Carroll's objections stated above.

It will be remembered that Baudry refers to the report of one of Lewin's patients, a report that enabled Lewin to posit the existence of the dream screen. Lewin states: 'The dream screen came to my notice when a young woman patient reported as follows: "I had my dream all ready for you; but when I was lying here looking at it, it turned over away from me, rolled up, and rolled away from me – over and over like two tumblers"'.¹⁹ Lewin attributed this phenomenon to the patient's final stages in waking up: 'The dream screen rolling away was the final event in her complete awakening',²⁰ and argues, following Otto Isakower,²¹ that the reverse occurs when going to sleep:

Isakower interprets the large masses, that approach beginning sleepers, as breasts. As it approaches the sleeper, the breast seems to grow; its convex

*surface flattens out and finally merges with the sleeper, often to the accompaniment of mouth sensations. My patient's belated waking up was the reverse experience. The flat dream screen curved over into a convex surface and went away.*²²

²² Lewin p 421; emphasis added.

²³ *ibid* p 427.

²⁴ *Science as Power*, pp ix-x.

My emphasis reinforces Baudry's analogy between dream screen and cinema screen, refuting part of Carroll's rather literal-minded critique. Lewin also offers an argument which refutes Carroll's contention that the infant is unable to experience itself as a separate entity from the mother's breast, for he suggests that the experience of the dream screen is not limited to the oral stage of the infant's development: 'Ego boundaries are lost when there is a fusion [of the infant] with the breast . . . In short, the sleeper has lost his ego boundaries because when he went to sleep he became united with the breast'.²³ However, I must point out that I am not attempting to reinstate the analogy; I am merely pointing out a major flaw in Carroll's critique. (Further on in chapter one Carroll analyses Metz's attempt, in 'The Fiction Film and its Spectator', to reformulate Baudry's analogy by comparing the film to the daydream rather than the nightdream. But Carroll also rejects Metz's analogy on the grounds that it is similarly based on the premise that the spectator undergoes a lowering of wakefulness.

Towards the end of his critique of Baudry, Carroll states:

In my account, Baudry is making a series of literal, logical scientific claims about a causal process. Thus, Baudry's conclusions are asserted with the rigor one would apply to any scientific hypothesis . . .

Personally, I find it difficult to see why a claim about the isolation of a causal mechanism [in this case regression as a motor force behind cinema] should not be treated as a scientific hypothesis. And so treated, Baudry's arguments by analogy are woefully inept; he fails to consider significant dis-analogies, while the analogies he presents are loose and superficial. (p 32)

The above statement is a clear demonstration of Carroll's scientific imperialism; scientific discourse sees itself fit to criticise systematically the unscientific basis of other discourses without justifying its own premises. It regards itself as the only legitimate discourse because it is based on the 'intrinsic' laws of reasoning. Hence the problem with analysing contemporary film theory as a series of scientific hypotheses is that it sets up a hierarchy of power relations. Indeed, as Aronowitz states: 'claims of authority in our contemporary world rest increasingly on the possession of legitimate knowledge, of which scientific discourses are supreme . . . As long as science is not situated within the panoply of discursive practices, but retains its axiomatic character, its power will remain beyond challenge.'²⁴

However, there has been a strong tendency in the 20th century to challenge the dominance of scientific discourse (which we can collectively group under the heading of 'antifoundationalism'). This challenge has become widespread through post-structuralism, of which contem-

²⁵ Quoted in Aronowitz, *ibid* pp 270-1. The phrase linking the two sections of the quote is Aronowitz's.

²⁶ See Metz, 'The Imaginary Signifier', pp 45-52.

porary film theory is a part, although it is also advanced in contemporary physics, post-Analytic philosophy, and the philosophy of science (beginning with the work of Kuhn and Feyerabend). The consequence for the scientific methodology of Analytic philosophy is no less than its relativisation to its transitory historical and cultural determinations, as Kurt Hubner emphasises in his *Critique of Scientific Reasoning*: 'Rational decisions are historical in that they are always connected to historical conditions. They are determined by a situation; and therefore there exist no intrinsic rational contents which might take on the form of particular goals and assumptions' which in turn 'can never make a claim to be universally valid for all times'.²⁵

Further in chapter one Carroll also criticises Metz's 'The Imaginary Signifier' in the same way he criticises Baudry: in terms of the analogies he posits between the filmic signifier and psychic phenomena. For Metz, the impetus behind these analogies is to explain the psychic effects produced by the specific features of the filmic signifier, which he identifies as a unique play upon the illusory presence and absence of a coherent, fictional diegesis.

Having identified the play of presence and absence as the unique feature of cinematic representation, Metz looks to psychoanalysis in order to review what it has to tell us about the play of presence and absence, especially in regard to our relations or potential relations to visual arrays where those are marked by a play of presence and absence analogous to that purportedly found in cinema. Metz finds analogous themes of presence and absence in four types of psychic phenomena: imaginary identification, voyeurism, disavowal, and fetishism. Metz proceeds to attempt to illuminate the cinematic experience by reference to these psychic phenomena conceived as prototypic analogs to the cinematic experience. (p 35)

Carroll then proceeds to weaken Metz's analogies. Again I shall concentrate upon the primary analogue – the activity of spectator identification in the cinema, explained by Metz in terms of the Lacanian concept of the Imaginary (and exemplified in the formation of the individual's ego by means of identification – leading to perceptual mastery – with one's mirror image).

The analogy comparing mirror image to filmic image is based on the perceptual mastery experienced by the individual when in front of both. But in the spectator's perceptual mastery over the filmic image there is, of course, a fundamental disanalogy, for his/her body image does not appear on screen. But then, the spectator's ego has already been formed. The cinema merely re-activates the psychic processes which have formed the ego, hence the spectator's body image need not literally appear on screen. Instead, s/he obtains perceptual mastery by identifying with the look of the camera 'by means of the camera lens' perspective system.²⁶ Carroll, however, uses this disanalogy to dismiss the hypothesis of Imaginary identification altogether (p 39), leading him to reject Metz's characterisation of the filmic image in terms of presence/absence (hence rejecting all of Metz's analogies).

In order to understand Carroll's objections to Metz, we must take into account his definition of fiction as *what* is represented, not *how* it is represented. Hence watching Welles' film *Macbeth* and watching an RSC production of the same play are equivalent in terms of our experience of them as fictions. The play of presence/absence has no psychoanalytic repercussions upon the spectator's experience of film, he claims, for the characters, settings etc are just as absent from the theatre as they are in the cinema.

However, for Metz, fiction is tied to the Imaginary status of the filmic signifier itself, as Constance Penley notes: 'When Metz says "Every film is a fiction film" . . . we are being referred back to the constitution of the cinematic signifier itself in which . . . it is always an imaginary referent since what it represents is not there, thus fictive.'²⁷ Hence for Metz the filmic signifier mimics Imaginary identification due to the absence of the spatial and temporal elsewhere the filmic signifier represents; but simultaneously, this absence is more there on screen due to the image's density of perceptual registers.²⁸ The filmic signifier therefore simulates, to a high degree, a spatial and temporal elsewhere; or, as Penley writes, filmic images 'refer the spectator to an illusory elsewhere, an imaginary space rather than the material reality of the spectator's own space and time'.²⁹ Carroll, however, limits Imaginary identification exclusively to the play of presence/absence between the individual and his/her body image in the mirror, and is therefore led to ask: 'Why, one wonders, if there is a faculty of the imaginary would it be triggered by film?' (p 39). It should be obvious that this question only has meaning within Carroll's own theoretical paradigm.

Towards the end of chapter one Carroll states: 'We shall see that there is a general tendency in contemporary film theory to maintain that film spectators are rapt in the illusion that what is represented – the cinematic referents – are really present' (p 43). Carroll reiterates this point in a recently-published article by means of an example: 'No one thinks that the Empire State Building is in the screening room during *King Kong*: how could it be?'³⁰ But to attribute this notion to contemporary film theory is sheer nonsense. Baudry's duology of film and dream and Metz's definition of the filmic signifier as Imaginary (thus fictive) at the outset both anchor a description of the impression of reality manifest in film as a fictional reality formed in conjunction with the spectator's Imaginary. It is not (primarily) formed by means of the image's likeness to our perception of everyday experience.

Of course, the impression of reality manifest in cinema is not completely divorced from the everyday impression of reality, but this is not its primary determination. Rather, as Metz explains, 'the impression of reality [in cinema] works to the benefit of the imaginary and not of the material which represents it . . . Consequently, *the impression of reality cannot be studied simply by comparing it with perception but we must also relate it to the various kinds of fictional perceptions*, the chief of which, apart from the representational arts, are the dream and phantasy'.³¹

²⁷ 'The Avant Garde and its Imaginary' *Camera Obscura* 2, Fall 1977, pp 12-13.

²⁸ *ibid* p 10. See also Metz, 'The Imaginary Signifier', p 61.

²⁹ 'The Avant Garde and its Imaginary', p 12.

³⁰ 'Conspiracy Theories of Representation', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* vol 17, 1987, p 399.

³¹ 'The Fiction Film and its Spectator', p 140; emphasis added.

³² 'India Song/Son Nom de Venise dans Calcutta Désert: the Compulsion to Repeat', October 17, Summer 1981, p 39.

³³ 'The Imaginary Signifier', p 72.

³⁴ *Film Language*, Oxford, 1974, p 143.

Carroll completely misrepresents the contemporary film theorists' account of the impression of reality, for this account *presupposes* a link between film and unconscious psychic phenomena, a link Carroll totally ignores throughout *Mystifying Movies*.

Carroll emphasises the relationship between image and proflimic event – that is, his account is developed within a theory of reproduction. But, as Joan Copjec has made clear, 'film theory turned from consideration of its object as a reproduction of reality, the proflimic, and became a critique of this very notion of reproduction in order to consider film as an intervention, an event, which participated in the production of a subject.'³² The cause in this shift in emphasis must be traced back to the Saussurean impulse behind contemporary film theory: Saussurean linguistics does not study the relation between language and reality (the referent) for it is constructed within a conventionalist, or relativist, epistemology – that is, language is theorised as being 'withdrawn' from external reality and, correspondingly, constructs its own internal reality. In order to explain the impression of reality that film language manifests, we must study the resulting subject effects that film constructs for the spectator which, in contemporary film theory, are analogous to processes such as dreams which are also characterised by a withdrawal of cathexis from external reality.

After this misrepresentation, Carroll proceeds to outline his own position: 'In contrast, my own position is that the spectator is aware that she is watching a film and does not mistake the image for their referents. With movies we generally focus our attention on what is represented, though we are aware in a subsidiary way that it is a representation to which we are attending'. (p 43) But both these premises are also assumed by the contemporary film theorists. For example Metz claims: 'It is understood that the audience is not duped by the diegetic illusion, it "knows" that the screen presents no more than a fiction.'³³ Metz also implies, in the context of the 'first semiology' of cinema, that we are simultaneously aware of both the representation and what is represented: 'One will never be able to analyse a film by speaking *directly* about the diegesis . . . because that is equivalent to examining the signifieds without taking the signifiers into consideration.'³⁴

The difference between Carroll and the contemporary film theorists is made clear further ahead in *Mystifying Movies*:

Rather than saying that we believe and simultaneously disbelieve in the presence of the cinematic referent [sic], I would say, following Polanyi, that our mode of attention is better characterised by way of two simultaneous, non-conflicting, modes of awareness: a focal mode, directed at what is being represented, and a subsidiary mode, through which we remain constantly aware that what is before us is a representation. And if this characterisation captures our relation to cinematic representation, then we have no need to hypothesise the operation of disavowal in film viewing for these states of consciousness – focal and subsidiary – are not contradictory states of belief such that one of them must be disavowed in order for the organism to maintain

equilibrium. That is, our relationship to the screen in terms of awareness is not analogous to the fetishist and does not, therefore, call forth a corresponding process of disavowal. (pp 43-4).

After we correct the error that disavowal in cinema does not refer to a conflicting belief and disbelief in the presence of a cinematic *referent* (rather, it refers to the conflicting belief and disbelief of the presence on screen of a fictional – fantasised – diegesis, in opposition to a material signifier), then Carroll's alternative account of our mode of relation to the cinematic image has a limited number of implications for a feminist critique of contemporary film theory. Briefly stated, Carroll's reference to Michael Polanyi might enable us to criticise Metz's conflation of a semiotic analysis of the filmic signifier with a psychoanalytic analysis, in which the semiotic play of presence/absence is interpreted in terms of the fetishist's disavowal of castration, resulting in the false premise that the filmic signifier addresses only the unconscious of the male spectator. But Carroll is simply not interested in developing a critique along these lines.

In chapter two Carroll devotes himself to a critique of the Althusserian-Lacanian paradigm, concentrating primarily upon Althusser's paper 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses',³⁵ where Althusser explains how the dominant capitalist relations of production are reproduced, even though they are structured upon repression and exploitation. Althusser appropriates the Lacanian concept of the Imaginary in order to explain the perpetuation of capitalism in terms of its construction – through ideology – of an illusory, transcendental ego, an illusion which masks from the individual the contradictions inherent in his/her real conditions of existence.

Carroll sums up the manner in which the contemporary film theorists employ the work of Althusser and Lacan by stating that:

Operating within the Althusserian-Lacanian framework, the film researcher has her path clearly marked off. To study ideology is first and foremost to study subject construction. Subject construction is crucially brought off by the projection of apparent unity by the other. So one should isolate the unity projecting features of film and explain the ways in which their apparent unity is counterfeited, including explaining the ways in which the recognition of heterogeneity in the Symbolic is contained. This will account for the way subject unity is induced. (p 72)

And:

The task of film researchers, then, becomes the isolation of the features of films that impart impressions of apparent unity. For these will be ideological levers that trigger the psyche to endorse the illusion of subject unity. Some of these features . . . include the perspectival image, narrative structure, synchronized sound, point of view editing, and a panoply of other cinematic devices. (ibid)

³⁵ *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press, 1971, pp 127-186.

In their application of the Althusserian-Lacanian paradigm, the contemporary film theorists concentrate upon the film's formal devices, or techniques (and the apparatuses that govern these techniques). And insofar as these techniques address the spectator and impart upon him/her 'impressions of apparent unity', they are regarded as inherently ideological. Carroll's critique of the contemporary film theorists' analyses of the structures of filmic representation (chapters three, four, and five) denies that they are inherently ideological.

In chapter three Carroll analyses the contemporary film theorists' account of the cinematic image, including their account of perspective, which will be the primary focus of attention here. Carroll's main contention is the definition of perspective as an arbitrary, codified, ideological form of spatial representation rather than, as Carroll defines perspective, an accurate conveyer of information concerning the appearances of the relative dispositions of objects in space – 'accurate' in that it is based upon the optical laws of vision.

But exactly how, for the contemporary film theorists, does perspective perpetuate capitalist ideology? Summing up their theory, Carroll writes: 'The organisation of space by perspective . . . is coincident with illusory subject unity' (p 128). The following quote by Baudry demonstrates this connection clearly enough, but also raises a number of issues Carroll completely ignores:

Western easel painting, presenting as it does a motionless and continuous whole, elaborates a total vision which corresponds to the idealistic conception of the fullness and homogeneity of 'being', and is, so to speak, representative of this conception. In this sense it contributes in a singularly emphatic way to the ideological function of art, which is to provide a tangible representation of metaphysics. The principle of transcendence which conditions and is conditioned by the perspective construction represented in painting and in the photographic image which copies from it seems to inspire all the idealist paeans to which the cinema has given rise.³⁶

³⁶ 'Ideological Effects . . .', p 298.

³⁷ On 'Likeness' theories of images in the Christian sense, see W J T Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986, pp 31-36.

³⁸ However, Carroll does give a theological interpretation to the play of presence/absence as posited in Lacanian psychoanalysis, p 240 footnote 18.

³⁹ *Questions of Cinema*, pp 19-75.

Cinema defined as 'the tangible representation of metaphysics', leads us to define the contemporary film theorists' account of the cinematic image as a likeness theory, in the sense that the image evokes a 'spiritual' likeness. (I am employing here the Christian meaning of the image in which 'man is created in the image of God' etc.³⁷) Within his scientific framework Carroll misses the religious references in the contemporary film theorists' non-scientific account of perspective. One reason is because he does not consider Baudry's paper 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' and only considers Metz's 'The Imaginary Signifier' (full of religious references in its discussion of the transcendence of vision etc) from the point of view of the play of presence/absence.³⁸ Instead Carroll's main focus is on Heath's essay 'Narrative Space'.³⁹ Here he points out that Heath, in describing the film's address to the spectator, employs the term 'position' equivocally. That is, it is employed both in the optical sense (the film, by means of the

camera lens' perspective system, addresses the spectator as a coherent subject by positioning him/her at the optical, spatial centre of the image), as well as in the Althusserian-Lacanian sense (the image addresses the spectator as a subject positioned at the centre of his/her experience).⁴⁰

Heath maintains a connection between the centrality of perspective's physically locatable station point and the centered position of the subject/spectator as coherent and stable. (p 135).

How do we or our psyches parlay a (doubtful) spatial position of centrality into a belief about the centrality of the subject? The latter is a very different phenomenon from the former, even if it is described in similar words. (p 136)

Carroll ends his discussion of perspective by pointing out that a number of advertisements do not employ perspective, yet they are as successful as perspectival ads. This leads him to conclude that 'the presence and absence of perspective in ads seems irrelevant to their ideological effect' (p 138).

Heath makes Carroll's aloof approach clear (in 'Le Pere Noel') when he restates his theory of perspective as presented in 'Narrative Space'. He remarks that he is unable to fathom Carroll's attempt to divorce perspective from a conventionalist reading and instead discuss it exclusively on a formal level – where discussion is limited to the visual (ie, textual) level of perspective. For 'Narrative Space' analyses perspective predominately on another level: it stresses 'the historical use of perspective and its development in picture making, in making movie pictures'.⁴¹ In a footnote on the same page, Heath affirms that such an historical account does not preclude, or necessarily oppose, a scientific analysis. Rather an historical analysis is concerned with the deployment of perspective within a particular context of image production, which, of course, is a pragmatic concern not confined to, but not excluding, the analysis of the formal properties of perspective, a conventionalist position. Carroll, limited exclusively to the latter, attempts to deny a historical reading of perspective.

For the contemporary film theorists, narrative operates in conjunction with perspective to position the spectator as a unified subject. (In this sense, then, narrative is a form of ideological representation.) Carroll traces the reasons why narrative organisation, for the contemporary film theorists, must supplement perspective in cinema:

Heath and his followers [?] believe that the operation of pictorial perspective in film faces certain formal problems that do not exist with respect to the functioning of perspective in painting. These problems are a result of the fact that there is movement of character and camera in film. This movement putatively provokes a crisis within the perspective system, since, for example, with every cut the subject's position is altered. How does the dominant, realist cinema camouflage this so that the spectator does not become

⁴⁰ Bordwell draws a similar conclusion in his interpretation of Heath's essay; see *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp 25-26.

⁴¹ 'Le Pere Noel', p 91.

⁴² See 'The Nature of Pronouns' and 'The Correlations of Tense in the French Verb', *Problems in General Linguistics*, pp 217-222 and 205-216 respectively.

⁴³ *The Subject of Semiotics*, Oxford, Oxford, 1983, pp 46-47.

⁴⁴ 'Hitchcock, the Enunciator', *Camera Obscura* 2, Fall 1977, pp 66-91.

⁴⁵ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p 23.

apprised from the disunity of the subject positions from shot to shot? The answer is to be found in narrative. (p 162)

Carroll discusses narrative and narration under three headings: enunciation, the internal structure of narrative (chapter four) and suture (or cinematic narration; chapter five).

The concepts of address, subject positioning, and interpellation can all be described in relation to Benveniste's discussions on pronouns and enunciation,⁴² as they are related to Althusser's and Lacan's theories of subjectivity. For example, they employ Benveniste's dichotomy *énoncé/énonciation* to describe the film's level of fiction, and level of enunciation respectively, as Kaja Silverman points out: 'The film's level of enunciation is in effect that of production – of camera movement, editing, composition, sound-recording, sound-mix, script etc. The level of fiction designates the narrative within which [the spectator] of the finished film is encouraged to "find" him or herself [or his/her place,] and the characters with whom he or she is encouraged to identify . . . [characters] who occupy a position within the narrative equivalent to that occupied by the first person pronoun in the sentence.'⁴³ We need to point out, however, that Bellour, in his seminal essay on Hitchcock, extends the concept of enunciation to include the director,⁴⁴ whereas the discursive marker the spectator primarily identifies with, or by means of which s/he finds his/her position in the fiction, is the vanishing point of the perspective system (inscribing an empty emplacement 'in front' of the image for the spectator to occupy) and written into the image by means of the camera. Identification therefore consists only secondly of spectator-character relationships. And in line with Benveniste's discussion of the *énoncé/énonciation* dichotomy, identification with the camera is regarded as effacing the marks of enunciation from the spectator because these marks, representing the spectator's position in the film, are not visible to him/her when s/he occupies that position.

Carroll, like Bordwell,⁴⁵ questions the analogy between pronouns and images, and argues that, unlike pronouns, images do not address and position the spectator (hence do not confer upon him/her a subjectivity, hence do not perpetuate capitalist ideology etc).

Carroll then extends his critique to those who recast Benveniste's dichotomy by divorcing the notion of the effacement of enunciation from the issue of pronouns: 'Dropping the linguistic window dressing, the contemporary theorist might wish to say that realist work effaces their enunciation by masking the fact that they are productions or constructions. That is, traditional film imparts the impression of transparency by effacing reference to their conditions of production, thereby appearing authorless, and, consequently, without motive, interest, point of view, ideological or otherwise' (p 155). These comments then force us back into the clutches of Carroll's argument that, for the contemporary film theory, film manifests the illusion that the referents are actually before the spectator on screen. But again, Carroll has confused

referent, or profilmic event, with the diegesis, or the more-than-real effect of dreams. Also, the contemporary film theorists do not formulate the effacement of the marks of enunciation as being in any way total. Carroll's criticisms do not, therefore, correspond to the contemporary film theorists' arguments.

Carroll then proceeds to criticise the 'alternation-repetition-transformation' model of the internal structure of narrative, which he describes as perpetuating the values of capitalist ideology by means of its construction of coherent subject positions. Briefly, this structure centres the spectator by 'tying up' the loose ends of the film; it returns the spectator to unresolved actions in order to resolve them, hence placing the spectator in a position of full knowledge, for this structure creates diegetic intelligibility and closure. (That is, the repetition of past scenes, in order to transform and resolve them, structures the spectator's experience of the film by creating for him/her the illusion of mastery of his/her experience over the entire temporal span of the film.) This narrative structure is interpreted, by the contemporary film theorists, as securing the spectator's position in the Symbolic, a position of mastery in which control over the loss of Imaginary presence is sustained by means of the spectator's illusory mastery over the signifier. Moreover, because the individual takes up this position in the Symbolic only by dissolving the Oedipus complex, a dissolution inaugurated through the disavowal of castration, then this position is designated as exclusively masculine. But again, Carroll does not criticise this conflation of sexual en-gendering and the formation of the illusion of a coherent subject position: he is merely concerned with criticising the latter, even though for Heath, MacCabe, Bellour etc the formation of subjectivity in cinema was first and foremost a masculine subjectivity.

In chapter five, Carroll analyses the contemporary film theorists' concept of suture, a concept which explains how subject positioning is constantly rearticulated across the disorientating cuts from one shot to another. One of the most important discussions of suture has been developed by Daniel Dayan, who develops the term within both the Lacanian theory of subjectivity (by means of the concept of the 'Absent One') and the Althusserian theory of ideology.⁴⁶ The efficacy of this concept for the contemporary film theorists is to emphasise that the spectator's lack-in-being is never fully disavowed by the Imaginary. Rather, the disavowal of one's lack-in-being is a process that must be constantly reactivated. As Heath concisely expresses it, the function of cinema, within capitalist ideology, is the 'perpetual retotalisation of the imaginary'.⁴⁷

Suture theory represents a culmination of the contemporary film theorists' arguments presented earlier: perspective, enunciation, subject positioning etc. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Carroll condemning it as a vacuous concept. And for once he begins to articulate his criticisms directly at the foundations of contemporary film theory – its premise that meaning, subjectivity etc is based upon lack and absence (p 191). But Carroll quickly moves on to argue for the viability of a

⁴⁶ 'The Tutor Code of Classical Cinema', *Movies and Methods*, Bill Nichols ed, University of California Press, 1976, pp 439-451.

⁴⁷ *Questions of Cinema*, p 8; emphasis added.

cognitive psychological account of narration that renders suture theory a meaningless concept. He begins his attack by referring to Bordwell: 'Bordwell argues that there are perfectly plausible, alternative hypotheses to the invocation of the unconscious Absent One by which we may organise the relevant spectator activities. Bordwell himself favors an account which presupposes the existence of spatial, temporal, and logical schemata which a spectator antecedently possesses and uses to test the visual array for intelligibility' (p 191).

The cognitive psychological theory is posited, by both Carroll and Bordwell, to explain the spectator's comprehension of the filmic text in a much more simplified manner than that offered by psychoanalysis and Althusserian Marxism, for they explain the spectator's activity in terms of his/her rational (ie, conscious), rather than irrational (unconscious), processes. This is because both Bordwell and Carroll regard film viewing to be, primarily, a rational activity. Psychoanalysis, argues Carroll, should be reserved for the explanation of irrational – indeterminate, contradictory, unpredictable – activity.

The cognitive theory of spectatorship offers a way out of the imperialism inherent in psychoanalytic theory. But Carroll, at least, advocates a cognitive imperialism for he attempts to explain filmic interpretation only in terms of cognitive psychology. Bordwell, however, states: 'While I do not deny the usefulness of psychoanalytic approaches to the spectator, I see no reason to claim for the unconscious any activities which can be explained on other grounds. In general, current film theory has underestimated the importance of the spectator's conscious and preconscious work. Study of narrative cognition may in fact be a prelude to psychoanalytic inquiry'.⁴⁸ It seems to me that understanding the activity of filmic comprehension requires both cognitive psychological and psychoanalytic theories. The structure of Carroll's argument, however, suggests that only the former has any validity. It appears that Carroll fails to overcome many of the problems he highlights in contemporary film theory, although, in part, he begins to explain in simpler terms the spectator's activity on the level of cinematic narration.

A cognitive-psychological theory of the image, narrative, and movie/narration

The case against contemporary film theory does not rest with simply noting its logical and empirical failings, but goes on to show there are superior, alternative ways of explaining the phenomena. (p 7)

Carroll replaces the concept of mimetic illusionism with an explanation of the representational image in terms of recognition: 'A film image, a photo, or a portrait represents x and, when it is successful, the spectator recognises x in the representation, ie, recognises that the representation is a representation of x. The factors involved in securing this recognition

are in the domain of perceptual psychology . . . recognition rather than illusion supplies us with a perfectly adequate framework for characterising the spectator's apprehension of mimetic representations' (pp 102-3).

This explanation of image comprehension in terms of recognition relies upon 'perceptual psychology, guided by conscious attention. Moreover, Carroll seems initially to develop his idea of image recognition through the work of Polanyi (although he is never mentioned again in the book), for Carroll suggests above that the spectator attends *subsidiarily* to the representation but *focuses* on x, on what is represented. And as Polanyi points out, the perceiver consciously integrates the subsidiaries into a focus in such a way that '[this] integration is intentional throughout and, as such, can be carried out *only by a conscious act of the mind*'.⁴⁹

However, in 'An Alternative View of the Cinematic Image', a subsection at the end of section three which develops the explanation of the image in terms of recognition, Carroll simply states that 'Picture recognition is not a skill acquired over and above object recognition. Whatever features or cues we come to employ in object recognition, we also mobilise to recognise what pictures depict' (p 139). He has now placed exclusive emphasis upon the focus, in which the subsidiaries are marginalised out of the picture (literally!). From this standpoint Carroll advocates that cinematic images, and other mimetic representations, are universally recognisable – 'are immediately accessible to *untutored* audiences in every corner of the world' (p 140).

It is no exaggeration to say that Carroll and the contemporary film theorists develop diametrically opposed theories of the image. To define the image as universally recognisable is attractive to Carroll because it has no ideological repercussions; it no doubt derives from the same earthly or vegetable origins as a snowflake or flower etc. Carroll completely ignores the historical and cultural determination of the image, while the contemporary film theorists, from within their semiotic framework, begin by analysing the specificity of the filmic medium. They place emphasis on the subsidiaries, upon the means by which the resulting image is formed. But Carroll regards the image as a pre-given, natural object. By contenting himself with analysing the end result only (the focus), he consequently ignores the means by which this end is achieved, despite his earlier reference to Polanyi. This is rather surprising, for to ignore the subsidiaries is to ignore the spectator's conscious integration of them into a focus. Hence Carroll's alternative theory of the image only leads to a dead end.

However, Carroll is more successful in his alternative accounts of narrative and movie narration, not least because he begins to consider how filmic devices as such affect the spectator psychologically. Carroll draws on one of Pudovkin's analyses of logical connections between sequences,⁵⁰ the suggestion that earlier scenes are linked to later scenes as questions are linked to answers (Carroll calls this link between scenes

⁴⁹ *Meaning*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1975, pp 40-41.

⁵⁰ Pudovkin, *Film Technique*, London, George Newnes, 1933.

'erotic' [p 171]). The first part of this narrative structure, the question, raises a number of possibilities as to how it can be answered, a number of expectations, only one of which is realised by the narrative in a subsequent scene:

When following a narrative film, I want to say, a spectator internalises the whole structure of interests depicted in the drama, and this structure includes alternative outcomes to various lines of action which the spectator must keep track of in some sense before one alternative is actualised in order for the film to be received as intelligible. I postulate that the spectator does this by tacitly projecting the range of outcomes as subconscious expectations which we then represent as questions. (p 173)

Carroll offers a number of refinements to this model: a scene may raise more than one question (or supply more than one answer); subsequent scenes may fulfil predictions rather than answer a question; scenes may intensify questions, or supply only partial answers; and a scene may supply an answer as well as raise a question (pp 174-5).

A digressive scene is one that does not conform to this schema, and Carroll points out that Pudovkin's other categories of scene connection – parallelism, symbolism, leitmotifs, and symbols – are digressions in this sense. The question/answer category is therefore presented as the dominant category, and Carroll speculates as to whether it is in fact 'the core structure of movie narration' (p 176), which sounds as if he is attempting to promote this category as an innate property of the mind activated by mass entertainment movies. Indeed, Carroll implies that, if this category is an innate mental capacity, then film's activation of it may explain the appeal of cinema: 'If it is a general feature of our cognitive makeup that, all things being equal, we not only want but expect answers to questions that have assertively put before us, this explains our intense engagement with movies' (p 181). More specifically, 'The powerful impression [of movies] whose source Baudry sought is nothing but the exceptional perspicuousness, economy, and clarity of the action in movies which is due to erotic narration. The action in movies, that is, unlike most of the action we encounter outside our cinemas (and fictions), is imbued with heightened sense, direction, and intelligibility' (p 180).

Carroll again discusses the powerful impression of movies in his alternative account of movie narration in section five. Contra the suture theorists, Carroll argues that it is by means of variable framing that shifting camera positions across cuts appear intelligible to spectators for, at least in mass entertainment movies, variable framing is systematically deployed to sustain the spectator's attention. Consequently '[it is] practically impossible for the movie viewer *not* to be attending where she is meant to attend. And, of course, the virtually unavoidable clarity of the movie narrative in respect to the potentially impeccable direction of attention is a major constituent of the coherence of movies for spectators' (p 201).

Carroll then discusses how the filmic devices which alter framing (particularly editing and camera movement) direct the spectator's attention on screen. He achieves this by means of the concepts of indexing, bracketing, and scaling. Indexing occurs when the camera is aimed towards an object, hence (obviously) directing the spectator's attention to it. More particularly, indexing may be achieved either through editing – a new shot presents a new object for our attention – or by means of camera movement, either a pan, track etc, to introduce new objects, or by means of a dolly-in to reveal a hitherto unnoticed object.

Bracketing refers to the frame's function of demarcating what is to appear inside the image and what is to be excluded. Hence bracketing directs our attention away from off-screen objects and towards on-screen objects, although it can also be deployed to frustrate expectations (Carroll cites Lang's *M* which, at the beginning, brackets out of the frame an important narrative element – the child killer). Scaling refers to the enlarging of the screen object, either by a dolly-in or by means of an analytic cut-in. This directs the spectator's attention by 'indicating that the object, or gestalt of objects, is the important item to attend to at this moment in the movie' (p 202).

For Carroll the powerful impression movies manifest is a corollary of the spectator's recognition of objects on screen and by the movies' depiction of intelligible action. And it is by means of scaling, bracketing, and indexing that 'the movie director assures that the spectator is attending when and where she should. The action and its details unfold in such a way that every element that is relevant is displayed at a distance that makes it eminently recognizable and in a sequence that is intelligible' (p 205).

Finally, Carroll integrates his theory of erotetic narrative with the variable framing concepts in order to formulate how movies function as a whole:

The first item or the first gestalt of items that the audience is led to attend to in a given shot is the item or gestalt that is most relevant to the progress of the narrative – ie, to the posing, sustaining, or answering of those questions the movie elicits to answer. The importance of variable framing for movies is the potential it affords for assuring that the audience attends to everything that is relevant, and that it does so automatically, so to speak. "Relevance" is here determined by the narrative, or, more specifically, by the questions and answers that drive the narrative, which in turn are saliently posed and answered in important ways by means of variable framing (p 206).

Erotetic narrative and the categories of framing, while offering an internally coherent account of narrative and movie narration, are extremely limited in scope (at least as presented in *Mystifying Movies*). Moreover, the complexity of the issues they raise mean that here I can only deal with a few of them on a superficial level.

The overwhelming problem with Carroll's alternative is its extreme

⁵¹ Cf J J Katz, 'Logic and Language: An Examination of Recent Criticisms of Intensionalism', vol VII of the *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Keith Gunderson ed, 1975, pp 36-130. Although Katz discusses only the semantic theories of Anglo-American philosophers of language, the Saussurean model of language can also be interpreted as semantic.

⁵² *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p 149.

⁵³ 'The Story Continues . . .', p 82.

formalism. In particular, his characterisation of 'the spectator' reading the connection between scenes primarily in terms of the one-dimensional binary logic of questions/answers is more fitting for the representation of the steps followed by a computer program rather than describing the activity of filmic comprehension. Moreover, in presenting this logic as an innate property of the mind, Carroll ignores the particular knowledge that spectators acquire in different sociohistorical contexts in order to comprehend a film from a particular point in film history (Carroll's spectator is therefore the spectator we met in his alternative account of the cinematic image). The ahistoricism of Carroll's alternative theory resembles the ahistoricism of 1970s film theory (hence it is not a viable alternative after all).

Both Carroll's theory and contemporary film theory are predominantly semantic in the sense that both proffer a formal, code model of comprehension,⁵¹ for both posit a fail-safe semantic algorithm between spectator and film that ensures, for the contemporary film theorists, an automatic subject effect and a correspondingly automatic ideological effect, and, for Carroll, recognisability and intelligibility because the film 'automatically' (Carroll's term) guides the spectator's attention to the relevant narrative objects and events.

However, pragmatic models of communication are not based upon semantic algorithm, but upon *inferences* which are generated contextually. Hence, unlike code/semantic models, which characterise meaning as being predetermined before use, pragmatic/inferential models of communication emphasise that meaning is determined only within the context of the message (that is, on an *a posteriori* basis).

The context includes the individual's background beliefs and assumptions, as well as his/her particular knowledge of the communication system, as determined by his/her sociohistorical environment. Granted, Carroll does place emphasis upon the spectator's background knowledge, but in characterising it as universal and innate, Carroll falls back into a code/semantic model.

It is at this point that we need to consider David Bordwell's cognitive-psychological theory of spectatorship, for it can be characterised as pragmatic. For example, he states that 'however much the ability to form schemata relies upon innate mental capacities, viewers acquire particular prototypes, templates, and procedures *socially*'⁵² (hence this cognitive theory is not based upon an algorithm, as Barry King suggests⁵³). Bordwell then considers the different modes of narration in four socio-historical contexts, rather than simply positing universal, innate schemata cued automatically by universal narrative codes.

Another problem with the code/semantic model is that it presupposes causes (ie, they are considered, on the whole, to be automatic) and instead concentrates merely upon effects (and as I have indicated throughout this review, Carroll is more prone to this type of theorising than the contemporary film theorists). Turning to Carroll's alternative theory of narrative we find that the spectator is posited to internalise

alternative outcomes of a question scene, 'which she must keep track of in some sense before one alternative is actualised, in order for the film to be received as intelligible' (p 173). This statement indicates that once an (or any) alternative is actualised the film will automatically appear intelligible. But we must not assume an automatic link between the actualisation of one narrative alternative, and intelligibility. For what if the actualised alternative is the one least expected by the spectator? (We can illustrate this by referring to Lang's *Secret Beyond the Door*: in one early scene we see a dark figure approach the female protagonist, Celia Lamphere, in the garden of her home at night. The screen goes blank and we hear her scream. This gap in the action prompts the spectator to project alternative hypotheses into this gap, particularly that it was Celia's husband, Mark Lamphere, and that he murdered Celia. But later in the film, when Mark enters Celia's bedroom, he is surprised, together with the spectator, to find Celia in there, alive and well. Hence the predominant hypothesis must be rejected, even though the, by now bewildered, spectator had good reason to believe it to be correct.)

However Carroll does not speculate upon the spectator's ranking of alternative hypotheses concerning the outcome to a question scene, hence he does not consider how a film may make one hypothesis more plausible to the spectator than other hypotheses, and hence he does not speculate on the resulting effects the actualisation of a particular outcome has on the spectator's comprehension of a film. Rather, we are merely informed that a film will appear intelligible once an alternative outcome is actualised. But it seems to me that in developing a theory of the spectator's cognitive *activity*, we must refuse to interpret effects (intelligibility in this instance) as automatic, because, as I shall demonstrate below, such effects are the result of a number of tenuous processes, and hence are open to exploitation (and *Secret Beyond the Door* exploits the tenuousness of hypotheses, and the processes of inference and intelligibility, to the full).

Bordwell's theory avoids many of the problems found in Carroll's cognitive theory for, in opposition to King's claim that schemata are theorised in *Narration in the Fiction Film* as being synthetic a priori,⁵⁴ Bordwell argues that perception is 'a process of active hypothesis-testing' and that 'The organism interrogates the environment for information which is then checked against perceptual hypothesis. The hypothesis is either confirmed or disconfirmed; in the latter case, a fresh hypothesis tends to appear... Like all inferences, perceptual experience tends to be a little risky, capable of being challenged by fresh environmental situations and new schemata. This cycle of perceptual-cognitive activity explains the ongoing, revisionist nature of perception'.⁵⁵

Bordwell offers a more precise and concise account of spectator activity than proffered by either Carroll or contemporary film theorists (at least within the semantic/pragmatic framework I have adopted in this section; Bordwell is not concerned with questions of sexuality in cine-

⁵⁴ *ibid* p 70.

⁵⁵ *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p 31.

⁵⁶ *Relevance, Communication and Cognition*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986.

⁵⁷ *ibid* p 142.

matic comprehension for example). With the pragmatic model of communication in general, Bordwell's theory raises a large number of important issues (which Barry King, in his review of *Narration in the Fiction Film*, did not take into consideration). I shall attempt to discuss a number of these issues through Dan Sperber's and Deirdre Wilson's book on *Relevance*.⁵⁶ This book is important for the present discussion, not only because it outlines with great clarity the issues that a pragmatic model of communication raises for a critique of code/semantic models of communication, but also because Carroll seems to adopt (albeit in a colloquial sense) the principle of relevance as defined by Sperber and Wilson. I therefore intend to give theoretical sustenance to Carroll's argument; but this will be coupled with a critique, for, within his code/semantic framework, Carroll treats relevance as an automatic effect (of narrative intelligibility and variable framing); that is, relevance is treated as part of the pre-given context of communication.

For Sperber and Wilson there is no pre-given context of communication in which to comprehend a message automatically. Consequently a message can, potentially at least, be given a vast number of interpretations. But the principle of relevance outlines the cognitive psychological delimitations upon interpretation.

The principle of relevance states that the hearer of an utterance processes it as productively as possible, by obtaining from it the optimal modification of his/her existing background assumptions possible from the minimum (adequate) amount of processing effort that such an effect warrants:

*If this is true, it suggests a complete reversal of the order of events in comprehension. It is not that first the context is determined, and relevance is assessed. On the contrary, people hope that the assumption being processed is relevant (or else they would not process it at all) and then try to select a context which will justify that hope: a context which will maximise relevance.*⁵⁷

Rather than positing a pre-existing context ensuring comprehension, Sperber and Wilson claim that comprehension is simply based upon the attempt to balance input against output. Moreover, both speaker and hearer assume that the other is abiding by this tenuous principle (the principle of relevance is therefore governed by the principle of charity). This is because it is in the interest of the speaker to communicate his/her assumptions by means of an utterance that will yield in the hearer the optimal modification of his/her existing assumptions with the minimum of processing effort that such an effect warrants (which is, of course, in the interest of the hearer). And because the hearer infers this to be the case, s/he will choose the context in which such an effect can be achieved, which is the same context intended by the speaker, thereby enabling the hearer to 'recover' from the utterance the assumptions of the speaker.

Of course, because this is an implicit, rather than explicit, assumption

made by both speaker and hearer, it can easily be exploited for poetic, rhetorical, political and other purposes.⁵⁸ Moreover, this principle can be employed to describe the spectator's relation to mass entertainment movies, in which we can say that they are characterised as being optimally relevant (as Carroll's description of relevance implies – see again the passage from p 206 quoted earlier). However, unlike Carroll, I would argue that the principle of relevance is not a pre-given part of the context of comprehension (which suggests that it cannot be exploited). For example, contemporary horror movies do not conform to the principle of relevance – that is, they do not optimally answer all the questions they pose, do not show all narratively important objects from an optimal distance from the camera etc.

Finally, it is important to point out that, because hypothesis-formation and testing is a tenuous process open to revision, rather than being an automatic fail-safe process, then such a process can be characterised as an open system rather than a closed system. That is, it is open to the influences of historical change.⁵⁹

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If it is true that the most appropriate way to demystify a well-established theory is to approach it through the eyes of a non-believer, then this maxim is taken to its limits by Noel Carroll in *Mystifying Movies* in respect to contemporary film theory. But at the same time, we must be wary of the non-believer's representation of the fundamental concepts that constitute that theory, for no matter how urgent the demystification an established theory may command, misrepresentation will simply leave that theory intact.

I wish to thank Thomas Elsaesser and Sean Cubitt for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

⁵⁸ H P Grice has developed a similar principle which he appropriately calls the 'co-operative principle', formulated in relation to four maxims of conversation; see 'Logic and Conversation', *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, P Cole and J Morgan eds, New York, Academic Press, 1975, pp 41-58.

⁵⁹ For a description of open and closed systems see Anthony Wilden, *System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange*, Tavistock; second edition, 1980, pp 356-61.

VIEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

ANN GAME REVIEWS 'TECHNOLOGIES OF GENDER' BY TERESA DE LAURETIS

In *Technologies of Gender*¹, Teresa de Lauretis continues and extends the project of *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984), again adopting a strategy of argument through textual readings, engaging with current critical debates and reformulating questions in feminist theory. *Alice* was primarily an interrogation of semiotic theory, a critical rereading of the classics of structuralism, semiotics, and psychoanalysis in terms of both their absences, what they make unrepresentable and also what is productive in these theories for the development of feminist theory. The central issue in that book was the paradoxical status of women in Western culture: 'woman' as ground of representation, mirror of masculine desire, and the absence of women as historical subjects. Women are simultaneously inside and outside representation. With *Technologies of Gender*, de Lauretis demonstrates the ways in which this paradox is constitutive of feminism. In this collection of essays she is more insistently feminist, moving beyond *Alice* in a concern with feminism as a rewriting as well as a rereading of Western culture: the inscription of a different gendered subject, 'the subject of feminism'. Neither 'woman' nor 'women', the subject of feminism is a 'definition in progress in this and other feminist critical texts'; it is an attempt to represent the inside/outside contradiction, thereby producing a critical space, 'elsewhere'.

Relations between Marxist and semiotic feminisms have not been easy; debates unproductively turn on questions of economy versus culture, social reality versus representation, and the social sciences versus the humanities. Despite the acknowledgement of the materiality of

ideology, Marxist feminists have generally regarded questions of culture and meaning as separate from and subordinate to what they take to be the social reality of gender relations. De Lauretis makes a contribution to these debates by engaging with Marxists and attempting to rework the social reality-representation relation. She demonstrates that semiotics is indispensable to the development of feminist theory, and that objects of analysis need not be reserved respectively for Marxists and semioticians. What indeed is the labour theory of value, if not a theory of meaning? As in *Alice*, but more explicitly as the title suggests, de Lauretis is concerned in *Technologies of Gender* with the development of a materialist semiotics. This is expressed, for example, in the somewhat self-evident proposition that 'the representation of gender is its construction' which she goes on to reformulate: 'the construction of gender is both the product and process of its representation' (p 5). In this formulation, the influence of Eco and Peirce is evident. De Lauretis takes up a semiotic approach that emphasises semiosis, processes of signification, the production of meaning, and the 'agency' of social subjects in these processes. She finds Peirce's sign-object-interpretant nexus particularly useful for a feminist materialist project in terms of the weight given to the 'real' (never outside of or prior to meaning); and, more importantly, the implications of the concept of the interpretant: 'the meaning effect on bodies', on 'individual subjects'. In her reading of Peirce

¹ *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* by Teresa de Lauretis, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1987.

'the individual's habit as a semiotic production is both the result and the condition of the social production of meaning' (p 41). In this lies the possibility of a semiotic theory that 'hinges on' a 'materialist *and* gendered subject'. De Lauretis is at pains to emphasise that social relations of gender and meaning are inextricable, and that in the micropolitical practices of feminism, changes in subjectivity and self-representation are possible.

Taking Foucault's conception of 'technologies of sex' as a starting point, de Lauretis uses the concept of 'technologies of gender' to designate the social and cultural practices that produce gender; her predominant, although not exclusive, interest being cinematic practices. But she goes beyond Foucault in asking how and why subject positions are taken up by individuals, what identifications and investments are involved. Feminism is, for her, about the production of new meanings, self-representations, which necessarily involves the question of how women might invest in gender positions other than those 'dictated by the patriarchal contract'. In this respect she remains 'true' to Foucault: the margins can be pushed, but there is no Utopian outside from which to speak. 'The construction of gender is also effected by its deconstruction' (p 3). This is a radical project – looking for what is repressed in discourse, and what exceeds, is disruptive of, dominant representation. In this regard, de Lauretis has much in common with Irigaray. However, she has less time for psychoanalysis than Irigaray does, evinced in the optimism that runs through the essays in this book. She is insistent about questions of agency, a term more familiar to social scientists than semioticians, and self-consciousness in processes of changing constructions of gender. In fact, the unconscious is curiously absent, even in the accounts of spectatorship and subjectivity (pp 142-144). Different investments, if not a matter of choice, are, for de Lauretis, related to changes in consciousness (pp 16-17), which is a far cry from the psychoanalytic concept of investment.

De Lauretis makes a number of overtures to the writings of Marxist and social science feminists. This is perhaps most evident in her use of the terms 'gender' and 'gender construction'. I find this shift in her work puzzling, for although her use of 'gender' is a good deal more sophisticated

than that to be found in social science literature, it is difficult to see how the problematic assumptions associated with it, particularly the sex/gender dualism, can be avoided. Somewhat ironically, her adoption of the concept comes out of a deconstructionist approach to sexual difference: a critique of hierarchised opposition, and difference of woman from man within the terms of Western patriarchy. Shifting from 'sexual difference' to 'gender', de Lauretis claims, makes it possible to displace a universal sex opposition, and articulate differences within women. Multiplicity can be conceived of with a notion of gender that is not coterminous with sexual difference. I can't see how 'gender' contributes to an understanding of the ways in which the positionings of women are simultaneously singular, within the frame of Western patriarchy, and multiple. Gender is used strategically against a fixing of positions, but de Lauretis does not deny the significance of bodies as the sex/gender distinction does. On the contrary, bodies are a crucial site in meaning processes, and it makes a difference if it is a man or a woman taking up the feminine. This emerges in her critiques of deconstructionist men on feminism, notions of reading and writing as a woman, the textual figure of femininity, and 'philosophers' refusals to identify femininity with 'real women', or the 'reader's gender', as she puts it. In this context it is clear that 'gender' has been taken up to signal a commitment to materialism. But it is confusing. Why not 'sex', the signification of sexed bodies and the interpellation of sexed subjects? The semiotic assumption that there is no body premeaning makes the sex/gender distinction redundant. Furthermore, if meaning is embodied (pp 41-42), lived corporeally, it is possible to conceptualise woman's body as simultaneously positioned by the fixings of masculine representations, and the site of multiplicity. As this is a major concern for de Lauretis it is surprising that she makes only passing reference to Irigaray whose writings are centrally about the embodiment of different meanings.

The confusion around 'gender' is symptomatic of a more general problem with de Lauretis's materialist semiotics. It was there, with the woman-women distinction and the concept of 'experience' in *Alice*, but it is more pronounced

in *Technologies*. Basically, the problem is this: in her attempts to reformulate the social reality-representation distinction through a materialist move, de Lauretis reinvents that very distinction that she is critical of in what she takes to be idealistic semiotics. A semiotician taking up Althusser and feminist social science might seem odd to a film theory audience in Britain or Australia where interests in semiotics and psychoanalysis tended to come via Althusserian Marxism, but it is intelligible in the context in which de Lauretis is writing: a 'left' academic culture without a strong Marxist tradition, and without an edge – the effect of American liberalism has been depoliticisation. Contemporary French thought has been taken up predominantly in the area of literary theory, and assimilated as a methodology, another analytic technique; and the objects of the humanities and social sciences, the textual and the 'real', have remained distinct. As Weber has put it:

*If authors such as Derrida, Foucault, and to a lesser extent, Lacan, have been granted admission into the American Academy, the price they have had to pay has generally entailed the universalisation and individualisation of their work, which has thereby been purged of its conflictual and strategic elements and presented instead as a self-standing methodology.*²

In the context of a narrow definition of the 'textual', and depoliticised critical theory, de Lauretis' insistence on materialism and political activism makes some sense. But the implied dualisms remain: 'practices' . . . weigh in the constitution of subjectivity as much as does language' (p 42); 'purely textual figure of femininity' versus 'real women' (p 24); and the 'subject of poststructuralist discourse . . . is an imaginary construct, nothing to do with the real' (p 123). However pertinent her critique of some post-structuralists might be, de Lauretis retains a distinction between representation and social reality, 'imaginary' and 'real'. Her materialist case would be strengthened by arguing for a materiality of language and a conception of language as practice through which subjectivity is constituted.

De Lauretis's politics can, in part, be located within a political culture outside the university dominated by identity politics, another effect of

the American liberal tradition. 'Practice of self-consciousness', 'experience of gender' (p 121), and the catalogue of 'race, class, gender, sexuality', even if put in terms of 'difference', are evidence of this influence³. The analysis of *Born in Flames* is not a textual analysis, and this marks a distinct shift in approach to film, from a concern with the text and its effects to questions of reception and feminist address (p 141). The essays on film demonstrate an impatience with feminist film theorist's analyses of form; de Lauretis is now more interested in feminist film practice, which is connected with the activism running through these essays. Again, I feel that the concern with a subject of feminism, and 'otherness from the text', has led de Lauretis to overstate a distinction between text and reader. The move away from textual analysis is a pity as de Lauretis is at her best in such analyses of non-feminist texts, for example, *Bad Timing* in *Alice*.

Technologies of Gender, like *Alice*, has a non-linear structure. With the exception of the first essay, 'The Technology of Gender', all the essays were written for other places and occasions, and they include an essay on feminist confrontations with structuralist and post-structuralist theory; readings of Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Calvino's *If on a Winter's night a traveler* and Fellini's *Juliet of the Spirits*; an essay on the Italian women's movement and Gramsci; and two essays on feminist film theory and practice. The structure of the book, ending as it does with these two essays, reflects what de Lauretis regards as the double project of feminism, the negative and the positive. Feminism is both deconstructive, 'a critical engagement with all discourses of gender, including feminist ones'; and, constructive, a practice articulating 'the conditions of

² Weber, S. *Institutions and Interpretation*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, pp 41-42. In the essay 'Capitalising history', pp 40-58, Weber provides a particularly good account of the effects of American liberalism on French theory, as well as a critique of Jameson's answer to post-structuralism from a totalising Marxist position. Cf de Lauretis, who quotes Jameson on 'History is not a text', with approval (p 111)

³ In the introduction to *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies* she explicitly takes up the concept of identity, claiming that it 'points to a more useful conception of the subject than the one proposed by neo Freudian psychoanalysis and post-structuralist theories'. In feminist writings identity is 'multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory', de Lauretis (ed) *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, p 9.

representability of another social subject' (p 135). In 'Strategies of Coherence' and 'Rethinking Women's Cinema', she considers the work of feminist film-makers, in particular Yvonne Rainer and Lizzie Borden, in terms of the production of a 'feminist social vision'. In connection with *The Man Who Envied Women*, she develops the idea of a contradictory coherence: not the rejection of narrativity as such, but a deconstruction which 'constructs a critical space' in which the spectator is addressed as 'a-women' (p 124). This is good stuff. Questions of spectator positionings and the 'heterogeneity in the female subject' or differences within women, are taken up in connection with *Born in Flames*.

Of the aberrant readings of (Italian) boys in *Technologies*, my preference is for the essay on Calvino. De Lauretis speaks of his seduction, and her critical pleasure is itself seductive: it made me go back to *Difficult Loves*, with pleasure. Why is pointing out the contradictions in such pleasures, which de Lauretis does well, regarded as the negative side of feminism?

Technologies of Gender will be provocative, I suspect, for both Marxist and semiotic feminists. De Lauretis is a sophisticated theoretician; her arguments complex and difficult. Indeed the argument sometimes gets lost in high theoretical gearing and exegetic detours. But she has made a significant contribution in bringing together different, sometimes hostile, theoretical traditions, in forceful and challenging reformulations of the central issues in feminism. In this regard, however, the omission of French feminists is curious, as they address similar issues. Cixous, for example, argues that women are simultaneously positioned within a masculine economy ('unfortunately, Hegel isn't inventing things'), and they are 'elsewhere'. If the Hegel-Lacan dialectic of desire is 'real', alternative structures of desire are also possible.⁴ This is close to de Lauretis' interest in the possibilities of cinematic inscription of different desires, desires of difference (p 109). Both Irigaray and Cixous avoid the either/or that is implicitly set up by de Lauretis in emphasising differences within women over sexual difference. Does this move against the hierarchisation of sexual difference involve an implicit hierarchisation within 'women'?

In the Preface she says that the project of

another book will be 'a fully constructed view from "elsewhere"', which seems to contradict the claim that 'elsewhere' is the 'elsewhere of discourse here and now, the blind spots, or the space-off, of its representation' (p 25). From what position will she speak 'a fully constructed view', and is there a point at which deconstruction comes to an end, where there is no elsewhere of the elsewhere?

⁴ Cixous, H, 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/ Forays' in Cixous, H and C Clément *The Newly Born Woman*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986, pp 78-83.